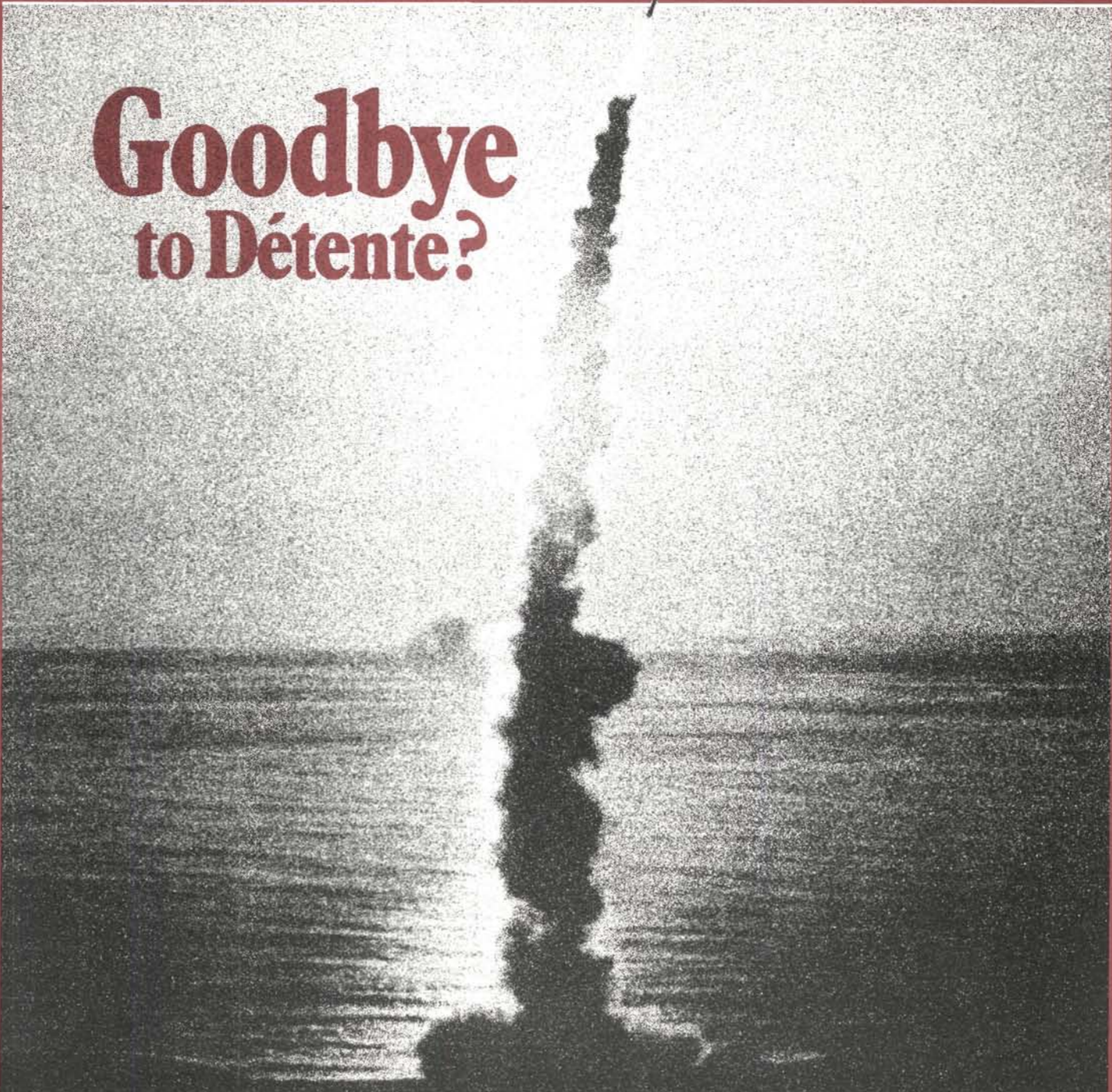


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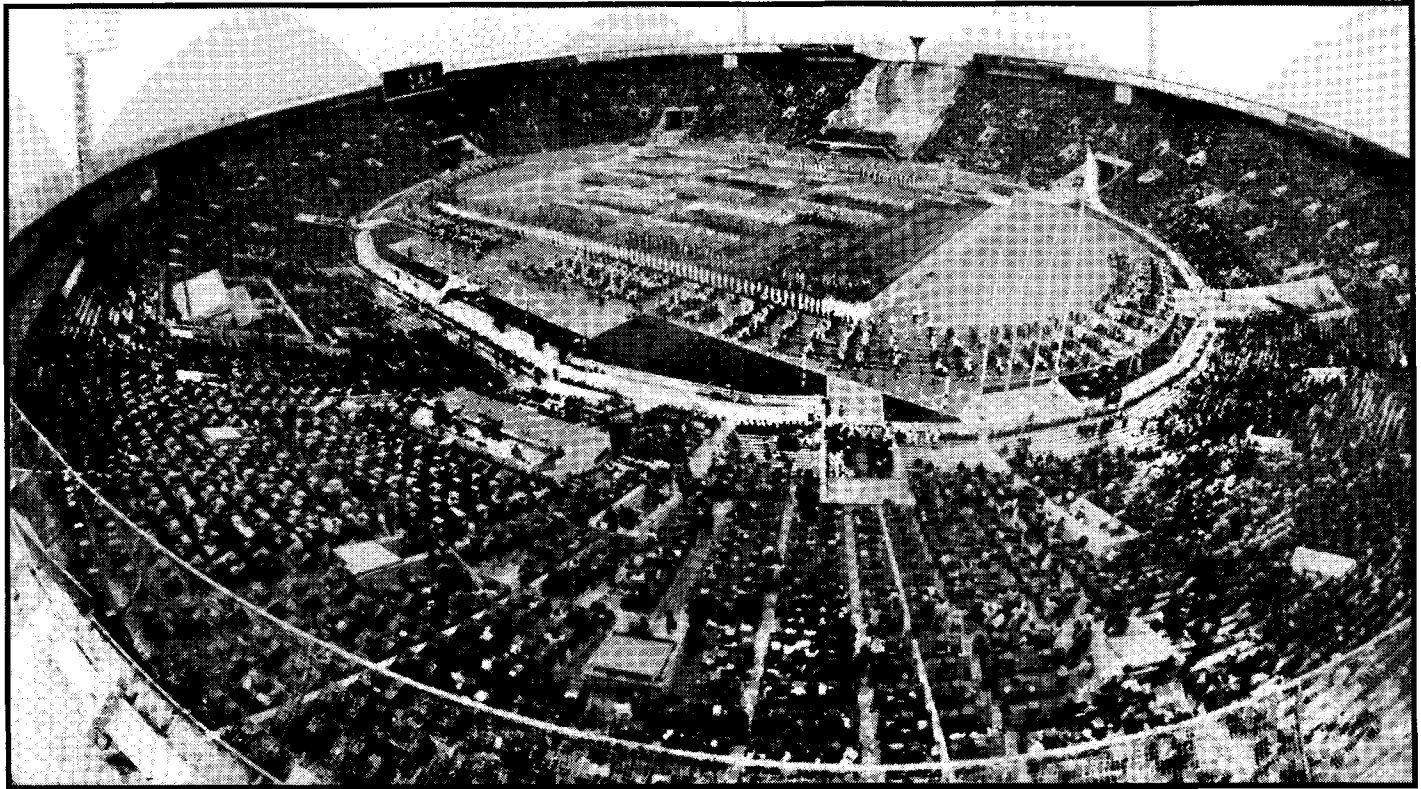
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ANOTHER OLD FLAME DIES

The Moscow Summer Olympics having drawn to an end, it is possible to make some preliminary assessment of the political and sporting constellation, in no small measure because so much has already been said and written, so much predigestion has occurred. Here was one of those occasions where every major international actor wore his/her heart on his/her sleeve. For Carter, Thatcher and Schmidt, it can remind observers of nothing so much as an audacious Solo player who, declaring *Royale Abondance*, finishes with *Misère Ouverte*.

These were to have been, as assiduous journalists from the *Daily Star* to the *Sun* were to routinely remind us, the 'devalued' games. No medal won in Moscow or at other Olympic sites, would be worth the metal in which it was struck without the cutting edge of competition from the Americans, West Germans, Japanese or Kenyans, or, indeed, the competitors from some 20 other nations. In all, the argument ran, 80 nations would not be there, although only 20 for explicit boycott reasons. What had happened to the remaining 60 is open to speculation — it may be that their impoverished and unsupported Olympic Associations were so starved of funds that they couldn't afford the stamp for the letters of acceptance.

There can be no doubt that some events suffered from the boycott and just how much is difficult to calculate. Three distinct sports were severely curtailed — the equestrian,

hockey and yachting, where even nations that were participating elsewhere had withdrawn teams. It is hard to imagine three sports more class-ridden. Dave Bedford, engaging distance specialist of the early-70s, has justifiably suggested in the first edition of an excellent new journal *Running* that those who probably ought not be in the Olympics anyway had sorted themselves out. He concluded, quoting from the London *Evening News*, that if Lucinda Prior-Palmer was opposed to the Games, it was crystal clear what position should be taken by any sane sportsperson. The absence of Western horseflesh and hockey sticks certainly threw up some odd results, like the women's hockey gold won by Cobham, Surrey *ex patriot* school girls now playing for Zimbabwe.

But for the most part, the gaps were more invisible than glaring. The standards were outstanding. 36 world records were broken, capping the Montreal Games by one, and very many more Olympic records went. It is conceivable that the presence of the Americans would have increased this number, particularly in the Olympic Pool, but it is difficult for any observer to doubt the sense of the comment by new president of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, 'I don't think there can be such a thing as a devalued record'. That's right. There were records of very different kinds, both those for speed and weight and length and height, and those for combinations of victories that will be long-

recalled like Teofilo Stevenson's third boxing heavyweight gold. He combines winning heavyweight bouts with membership of the Cuban legislature, presumably alternating using his right arm for voting and, as the boxing fraternity put it, 'turning them to stone'. (That's what his right arm is for.) Or the victories of the British athletes. No callow nationalism, this, for it is really remarkable that anyone drawn from amid the paucity of British facilities, unnurtured and all-but unsupported financially, should make the qualifying standards, much less achieve Moscow gold. Daley Thompson's achievement is particularly significant in these terms.

The dreariest performances in Moscow, the most lack-lustre, must surely have come from British sports journalists. This admirable group normally compete to be first through the doors of El Vino's bar when swiftness of foot is at a premium, or first to the bar when last orders are rung, an event where deftness of elbow and stranglehold feature. Now they were hot in pursuit of being the first to get 'knocking copy' on London sports desks, and it was made no easier by the success of the sporting events. The response was sufficiently predictable to have been left sealed in an envelope before they went. 'Serried ranks of Soviet soldiers', 'joylessness in the streets', 'inability to communicate with the locals', 'a wicked lack of bath plugs in Moscow hotels', and, believe it or not, the fact that Soviet women's legs are hairy (Frank Keating, *The Guardian*). The

anguish of the television interviewer who could not get a British athlete to acknowledge that the Soviet competitors drink fresh baby's blood in the Olympic village, is piteous to behold. It must have sent them stumbling for the free vodka.

Ah yes, that was the other thing. The efficiency of the Games and the free vodka. That was the hardest thing for the press to stomach. Made the whole thing inhuman. Thus while it really was a pity that officious officials half-dragged winning athletes from the stadium to keep up with the schedule, our lads saw it as no more than further evidence of a wider truth that any nation which could organise *that* well were not the sort of people about whom you thought peacefully . . .

But all that nonsense aside, as Lord Killanin put it, in summary, they were a genuine Olympics, and the Americans will do well if they emulate them.

The declared aim of the leaders of the boycott nations was to sensitise the Russian people to the fact of the Afghanistan invasion, to indicate the repugnance felt in the West, and to deny the Soviet Union any propaganda pay-off by devaluation of the Games. The undeclared interests are matters for speculation, but it may not stray too far from the truth to suggest that Jimmy Carter was looking for opportunities to portray himself as the decisive Western leader we all know him secretly to be. Conceivably Margaret Thatcher believed that some deflection of attention from the records she is currently setting in unemployment and inflation was desirable.

The explicit goals were clearly failures. Western journalists, who on this question appeared to find no difficulty in sounding out the natives, found that they knew about the Afghanistan invasion and appeared to approve of it. However regrettable that may appear to be to all shades of political opinion in Britain, including the left for the most part, it remained clear that Western sentiment was widely known in the Soviet Union and treated dismissively. It may be thought that the strategy advisers in London, Bonn, Tokyo and Washington might have known that this was the case before making it the cornerstone of their rationale, and it is necessary to draw the conclusion that they did. It suggests, of course, that other considerations were of greater significance: both the transfusion given to the decimation of detente and the pursuit of the inexplicit goals. It must have been of some disappointment to Jimmy that while he was expecting to spend his time rattling election sabres, he was himself being rattled by the latest indiscretions of brother Billy. As for Thatcher, her passionate appeals for the

freedom of the Afghani nation were drowned in the final week of the Games by the fury of two million unemployed people.

Carter's final error, and it was predictable, was in his attempt to mount a substitute Olympics for the non-participating nations in Philadelphia. In weather that ranged from wild storms to hurricanes, few athletes showed and still fewer spectators. Indeed, there is much speculation as to whether these games actually took place.

While there is little doubt that an enormous propaganda success was scored by the Soviet Union in the Games, some notable problems emerged which are more to do with the current state of international sport than with their recent venue. The speeds achieved in the water and distances covered in field events have come to owe more and more to anabolic steroids in recent years, a phenomenon apparent in much athletic activity and of which many socialist and non-socialist countries are equally guilty. The administration of testosterone following withdrawal of steroids about four weeks before competition makes the steroids impossible to detect and counteracts withdrawal itself. Testosterone, a natural secretion, is as yet impossible to discriminate as an outside agent.

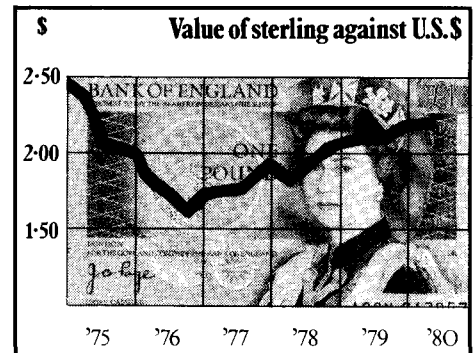
It may fairly be said that the Soviet Olympic authorities could do little to prevent the medals going with the pills. More within their control lay the standards of fairness in judging. It is clear, for example, that foul throws in the hammer and javelin were not always given against Russian athletes, and although West German officials were thought to have been still worse offenders at Munich in favour of their athletes, it need not have happened in Moscow.

Finally, there comes the issue of the balance between the sporting character of the occasion, its gaiety and spontaneity, and the orchestration of massive spectacles. To be sure, the tendency in all Olympics, with the exception of the Lake Placid Winter Games, has been toward the latter, and in Lake Placid it varied only because everything kept going wrong thus generating unlooked-for 'spontaneity'. But there must be an increasingly strong voice in favour of limiting the huge, well-drilled (as they must be) and attractive spectacles because they get in the way of the main purpose of the event, most especially because they make it almost impossible for any poorer nation to mount an equivalent Olympiad. They also make such occasions even more vulnerable to either the political intervention of hostile governments or the more local political opposition. This encourages host nations to move political dissidents away from the host cities.

Yet overall, they were a success and as the unrecognisable and unrecognised flag of Los Angeles rose over the Lenin Stadium to signal the end of this Olympiad and signpost the next, the Soviet Union must have felt that their Games stood among the more distinguished while the next was already in the melting pot.

THE TORIES' HIGH EXCHANGE RATE POLICY

A few years ago there was much discussion of the dangers to the UK economy of the so-called 'Dutch disease'. It was argued that self-sufficiency in oil would follow the



example of Holland and improve the balance of payments, pushing the current account into surplus. The value of sterling would then rise to such a level that home industry would find it impossible to compete either in export markets or with imports.

The danger of a chronic surplus on Britain's balance of payments is, however, as remote as ever. In 1979 Britain faced a deficit of £2.4 billion on the current account, a similar deficit is likely for 1980 and in 1981 the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) forecast a continuing deficit of over £1.3 billion. The reason for this state of affairs is that the balance of payments gains from North Sea oil are being more than wiped out by the continuing relative decline of Britain's main export earner, manufacturing. Imports of foreign manufactured goods have been rising faster than manufactured exports for some twenty years, but since 1978 this trend has been given an extra twist by the rapid appreciation of sterling.

The exchange rate for sterling is now around 17% higher than at the end of the last period of devaluation in 1976. Over the same period costs in Britain have risen by about 14% more than other capitalist countries. Thus the cost position is in foreign currency terms some 30% worse for UK exporters relative to foreign competitors than it was in 1976.

North Sea oil has meant that some appreciation of sterling was inevitable in the

David Triesman, Paul Levine



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John Cox

Goodbye to Détente?

The recent upsurge in peace campaigning in Britain is a result of a growing feeling that détente has failed and that nuclear war may be the consequence. This fear has arisen from a steady deterioration in US/USSR relations in the past three years and has stimulated renewed questioning of several basic issues — for example, is permanent peace possible without socialism? Would world socialism be a guarantee of peace? For those who have returned only lately to peace campaigning, having believed that détente was resolving these problems, the answers may be disturbing. For sure, the conclusions of two decades ago are not always valid today.

Although the peace movement has achieved wide unity behind three immediate demands — no Trident, no Cruise Missiles, Cut Arms Spending — this masks alternative explanations of the causes of international conflict and for the responsibilities of states for confrontations. These disagreements are reflected in alternative strategies for the peace movement and expressed through a bewildering multiplicity of organisations. Three trends are worthy of definition for the purposes of this article — although only the third needs to be explored in depth.

(i) *US=USSR*

This trend places equal blame for the arms race on the USA and the USSR and derives support from pacifist and ultra-left groups, as well as from 'respectable' organisations such as the United Nations Association (UNA), National Peace Council (NPC) and the recently-formed World Disarmament Campaign (WDC), of which more later. Newcomers to the peace movement usually start from and move through this position — it is, after all, a big advance on 'USA = peace'!



The long-term adherents of this trend frequently attempt to distance peace campaigning from socialist activities and the labour movement.

(ii) *Peace=USSR*

This school uses the peace movement as a platform to explain and win support for Soviet foreign policy. It sees little or no distinction between the struggles for peace and for socialism. Its supporters are influential in the New Communist Party (NCP), the British Soviet Friendship Society (BSFS) and a loose affiliate of the World Peace Council (WPC) which has been renamed recently as the British Peace Assembly (BPA).

(iii) *British non-alignment*

Most active peace campaigners appreciate that the US has been the pacemaker in the arms race but, to a greater or lesser degree, are critical of aspects of Soviet foreign policy. However, the main thrust of mainstream peace campaigning is directed against Britain's contribution to the arms race thus, though incidentally rather than as a conscious policy, avoiding major disputations over the roles of the US and USSR. This is the standpoint of Britain's best known and most active peace campaigning body — the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) — and, in general, is the position taken by left and progressive opinion in Britain. Although many CND activists are socialists and have close ties with the labour movement, peace campaigning is recognised as a broader issue which needs to involve a much wider spectrum of concerned people.

The main purpose of this article is to explain and develop the standpoint of the mainstream trend, which is, in effect, to recommend a non-aligned foreign policy and role for Britain. To an extent this will be a polemic against the 'Peace=USSR' trend but, to keep this in perspective, it needs to be noted that the 'US=USSR' trend has far more adherents and is of greater significance in formulating the day-to-day efforts of the peace movement. To clarify the arena of debate for this article, the following will be adopted as 'axioms':

- (a) The US is, and always has been, the pacemaker in the arms race. The Soviet Union has responded to this threat by maintaining her military forces at the level perceived as necessary for defensive security -- whilst genuinely preferring and working for mutual disarmament.
- (b) The US, and her allies, seek to preserve reactionary regimes throughout the world. The USSR, and her allies, seek to undermine reactionary regimes throughout the world though, quite often, muting this policy in its own state interests.
- (c) The US seeks to maintain its influence by all means available to it, including the use of force to whatever level it deems necessary and feasible. The USSR does not use military forces to anything like the same degree but also is prepared, on occasions, to use military methods to achieve political ends.
- (d) The US/USSR conflict is not merely between antagonistic *social systems*; it is also a struggle between *nation states* for power and influence. The arena of conflict includes political, economic and military facets as well as an ideological struggle.
- (e) The actions of the US/USSR cannot be explained simply by a neat bipolar logical conflict. Governments are subject to contradictory pressures, both internal and external, and often make mistakes and alter policies.

The presentation of the above as axioms does not imply that they can be taken for granted — indeed, a very large part of the public work of the peace movement is to convince people of these truths, especially in demolishing the myths of Soviet military superiority which are used to justify further spending on arms. However, for the purposes of this article, these 'axioms' will be taken as a starting point for a sympathetic but critical examination of the evolution of Soviet foreign

nowadays the Soviet Union places relatively greater reliance upon its own military and economic capabilities.

policy and the implications this has for the strategy of the peace movement in Britain today.

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

The long-term goal of Soviet foreign policy is, and has been almost since its inception, 'peaceful coexistence' — a world situation in which nations with differing social systems coexist without threatening or attempting to alter each other's social system by military means. It presupposes that political and ideological conflict will continue and that social systems can and will be changed by revolutionary and by evolutionary transitions.

During a period of peaceful coexistence, there would be no restraint on political and ideological initiatives by the Soviet Union in support of oppressed groups and classes in the capitalist world. By implication, once military force has been outlawed, it would be acceptable for the capitalist world to give political and ideological support to disadvantaged groups in socialist countries. (However, Soviet writers do not dwell on this aspect of peaceful coexistence as they do not readily agree that disadvantaged groups can exist in a socialist society).

Peaceful coexistence was formulated as the long term goal of Soviet foreign policy when the alternative (Trotskyite) strategy was much more 'interventionist'. That is to say, as an alternative to the Soviet Union establishing diplomatic relations with capitalist states, the minority argued that the CPSU(B) should use its newly-acquired state power to aid revolutionary change in other countries even, perhaps, at the expense of national security for the Soviet Union. This debate was part of the wider argument over whether it was possible to build socialism in one country, surrounded by hostile capitalist states.

During the early years of Soviet power this debate was not academic. Almost as soon as the 1914-18 war ended, the Soviet Union had been invaded by the forces of sixteen antagonistic capitalist countries. For a time it seemed possible that this 'war of intervention' would destroy the new workers' state. The obvious response to 'international capitalist solidarity' was to strengthen international working-class action by taking the revolution into the capitalist heartlands.

In the event, the Soviet Union was not crushed — but neither was its revolutionary example followed successfully elsewhere. The survival of the Soviet Union was assured by its own internal strength and, very important at the time, international opposition to the war of intervention and the provocations that continued afterwards. So the concept of peaceful coexistence was a logical outcome from these contemporary events. It was postulated that Soviet power would be maintained by strengthening the Soviet Union *as a state* whilst retaining the sympathy of the peoples of the capitalist world to make *aggression politically impossible*. This same combination of internal and external forces would be needed to ensure peaceful coexistence and to enable socialism to be built in one country.

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

In practice the Soviet Union has built socialism without peaceful coexistence in the 'pure' form defined above. The conflict between the antagonistic social systems has been extremely complex, and, though only occasionally involving direct military confrontation, has ranged over the entire world and involved military, economic, political and

even cultural competition. Over the course of the years, the Soviet Union has become more reliant upon its own resources to wage this conflict and, partly as a consequence of this, has placed less emphasis upon its need for allies within the capitalist world. The evolution of Soviet foreign policy reflects these changing circumstances.

From its inception, the Soviet Union maintained military forces to resist aggression and insisted that it had no territorial ambitions or desire to cross its own boundaries. The first notable breach in this policy occurred in 1939, when the Soviet Union invaded Finland and Poland as *pre-emptive* measures to forestall Nazi aggression. Later, as a *response* to the Nazi aggression against the Soviet Union, in 1944 and 1945, the Red Army became an occupation force in much of Eastern Europe. These occupations were not planned and, in this sense, did not breach the non-interventionist policy adopted by the Soviet Union from its early years.

A less dramatic but, eventually, more significant involvement had occurred earlier, with the support given to the Republic of Spain during the 1936-39 Civil War. This was an important precedent for support to a participant in a civil war having a moral claim to represent the peoples' wishes. The precedent became more significant after 1945 when the Soviet Union gave assistance to national liberation struggles against the empires of Britain, France, Holland, Spain and Portugal.

In effect, the Soviet policy of non-intervention, as postulated for relations between sovereign states, was held to be not relevant to imperial possessions, which were deemed to be held by the oppression of sovereign peoples. Aid to national liberation struggles also was treated as a defensive measure against the imperialists who, particularly during the Cold War after 1945, adopted very hostile policies towards the Soviet Union. The success of these struggles weakened imperialism and won for the Soviet Union valuable allies in the Third World. By the 1960s most colonies had become legally independent or were assured of early independence.

Independence changed the nature of the relationship between national liberation movements and the Soviet Union. Although Soviet economic and military assistance continued, and often increased to strengthen the anti-imperialist forces, the recipients now were governments with a variety of domestic policies. Egypt, Uganda, Nigeria, India, Iraq and Iran are amongst a long and still growing list of countries whose governments have pursued objectionable domestic policies whilst continuing to receive Soviet support.

This predictable outcome from strict Soviet adherence to non-interference has alienated progressive opinion in many countries — especially when, to maintain good diplomatic relations, the Soviet Union has given warm public support for extremely obnoxious regimes (for example the Shah's Iran). More serious still, the claim for a principled Soviet approach to non-interference now has lost credibility since the Soviet Union latterly has intervened with increasing frequency in the affairs of socialist and socialist-orientated governments in Eastern Europe, the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan.

In summary, Soviet foreign policy has evolved over the years with the unfolding of events and the growing strength and influence of the Soviet state. Whereas it was initially opposed in principle to any involvement in the internal affairs of other nations, it now has become an active participant in the affairs of many. Whereas in its early years it depended for its very survival upon the support it received from the peace movements of other countries — and set great store by this — nowadays the Soviet Union places relatively greater reliance upon its own military and economic capabilities.

These modifications in the Soviet approach to inter-state relations have evolved from the new situation in which the Soviet Union finds itself — notably its wider international involvement and greater military and economic strength. In considering next the post-war

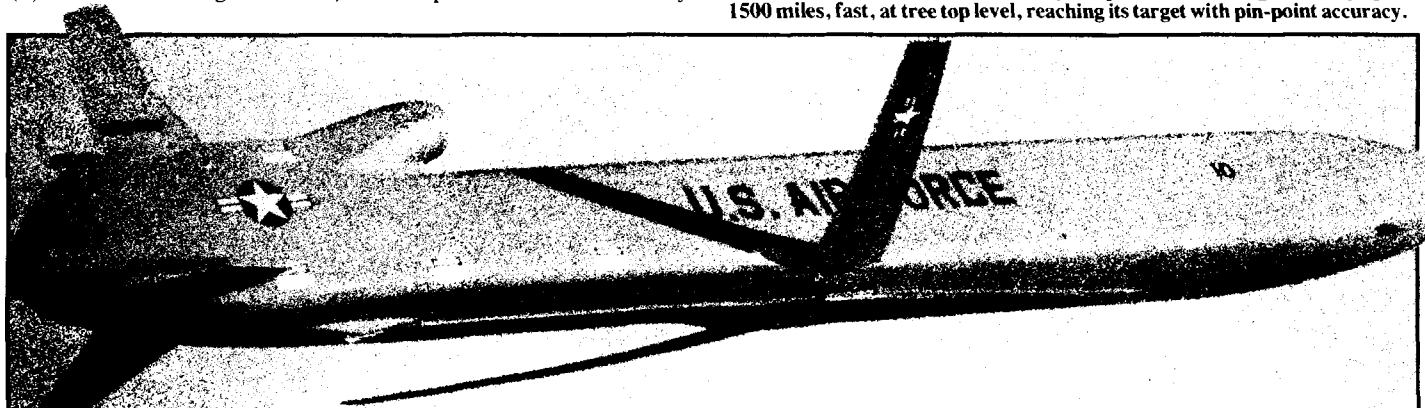
years, in approximate chronological sequence, modifications in the Soviet approach to disarmament also will be noted as a reflection of the growth in Soviet strength.

THE COLD WAR

The events of the Cold War period (from 1945 to about 1960) have aroused much controversy. It was a period when US/USSR hostility dominated international relations, but without a direct military conflict. It arose after the success of the wartime alliance against the Axis powers. With the defeat of the common enemy, inter-alliance rivalries came to the fore and were made more acute by the changed balance of forces in the world, especially in Europe and with respect to the older imperialist powers.

Several progressive historians have suggested that there were many genuine misunderstandings, that mistakes were made on both sides and that the confrontation need not have been so intense. What cannot be disputed includes:

- (a) the countries occupied by the victorious Red Army in 1945, with the partial exception of Austria, have joined the socialist camp.
- (b) all other European countries, save for the special case of Yugoslavia, have remained in the capitalist camp.
- (c) the US emerged as by far the strongest world power and openly threatened to use its military superiority against the Soviet Union.
- (d) the USSR emerged as a major world power and used its newly-



discovered strength and influence to aid national liberation struggles.

While the Soviet Union was the pacemaker in this period in encouraging political changes, the US sought to prevent political change using military means and, on several occasions, directly threatened the USSR — some influential circles openly advocating a pre-emptive nuclear attack. Although it seems improbable that this was seriously contemplated, the threats led the Soviet Union to place much greater emphasis than hitherto on strengthening its military forces and on weakening imperialism by support for national liberation struggles.

At the same time the Soviet Union took many diplomatic initiatives to halt rearmament and tabled many realistic proposals for General and Complete Disarmament (GCD). A powerful world-wide peace movement developed, spurred on by the World Peace Council (WPC), which provided valuable support for these Soviet initiatives. By the early 1950s peace was denounced in the Western media as Soviet propaganda!

Soviet insistence on GCD during this period was not absolute (they also supported proposals for regional demilitarisation, notably in Central Europe) but it certainly received the major share of Soviet peace initiatives. Partial arms control measures were criticised on two major counts:

- (a) that the agreements would give a cloak of legitimacy to the continued possession of armaments, at levels which could not be

and millions of workers have a future in a continuation of the arms race

justified on grounds of world security.

- (b) that partial measures, by dealing with the outcome of the arms race rather than its causes, would redirect but not halt the arms race.

Despite these peace initiatives, and the efforts of the peace movement, West Germany was rearmed, NATO was formed and thermonuclear weapons were developed and deployed. The Soviet Union responded (after a time lag) with equivalent military measures which, although never matching the armaments of the West, were sufficient to ensure that a nuclear war would be suicidal for both sides. When the Cold War 'thawed' (from about 1955), it probably had more to do with this approximate parity in military forces than the strength of the peace movement.

What the peace movement achieved was to force realisation that no useful purpose could be served by a nuclear war (with the weapons technology then deployed). The West's policy then turned towards *controlling the arms race* — whilst, until the fall of Khrushchev, the Soviet Union remained sceptical of arms control and continued to press for GCD. But, by then, the arms race had gathered a momentum of its own which was not easily halted.

The air-launched cruise missile, a key weapon for the Pentagon, can fly up to 1500 miles, fast, at tree top level, reaching its target with pin-point accuracy.

THE ARMS RACE

The modern-day arms race began in 1945 and originated with the disputes of the Cold War. Since this spans the entire post-war period it is useful to digress temporarily from the chronological sequence of the political events and to examine the dynamic behaviour of the arms race. Although the *primary cause* of the arms race was the antagonism between the social systems, the *pace* appears to be determined not so much by its primary cause as by self-generated mechanisms. The purely military aspects of these mechanisms were ably described by Robert McNamara in 1968 when he was US Defence Secretary:

'The United States must not and will not permit itself ever to get into a position in which another nation, or combination of nations, would possess a first-strike capability against it. Such a position not only would constitute an intolerable threat to our security, but it obviously would remove our ability to deter nuclear aggression.

We are not in that position today, and there is no foreseeable danger of our ever getting into that position . . . Our alert forces alone carry more than 2,200 weapons, each averaging more than the explosive equivalent of 1 megaton of TNT. Four hundred of these delivered on the Soviet Union would be sufficient to destroy over one third of her population and one half of her industry. All these flexible and highly reliable forces are equipped with devices that ensure their penetration of Soviet defenses . . .

The most frequent question that arises is whether or not the United

States possesses nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. The answer is that we do . . . the most meaningful and realistic measurement of nuclear capability is the number of separate warheads that can be delivered accurately on individual high-priority targets with sufficient power to destroy them . . .

One point should be made quite clear, however: our current numerical superiority over the Soviet Union in reliable, accurate and effective warheads is both greater than we had originally planned and more than we require . . .

How this came about is a significant illustration of the intrinsic dynamics of the nuclear arms race.

In 1961 when I became Secretary of Defense, the Soviet Union had a very small operational arsenal of intercontinental missiles. However, it did possess the technological and industrial capacity to enlarge that arsenal very substantially over the succeeding several years. We had no evidence that the Soviets did plan, in fact, fully to use that capability. But, as I have pointed out, a strategic planner must be conservative in his calculations; that is, he must prepare for the worst plausible case and not be content to hope and prepare merely for the most probable.

Since we could not be certain of Soviet intentions, since we could not be sure that they would not undertake a massive build-up, we had to insure against such an eventuality by undertaking a major buildup of our own Minutemen and Polaris forces. Thus, in the course of hedging against what was then only a theoretically possible Soviet buildup, we took decisions which have resulted in our current superiority in numbers of warheads and deliverable megatons. But the blunt fact remains that, if we had had more accurate information about planned Soviet strategic forces, we simply would not have needed to build as large a nuclear arsenal as we have today . . .

In recent years the Soviets have substantially increased their offensive forces. We have been watching and evaluating this very carefully, of course; clearly the Soviet buildup is in part a reaction to our own buildup

A coincidence of contradictory interests made it feasible for the US and USSR to reach *temporary* understanding on key issues

since the beginning of the 1960s. Soviet strategic planners undoubtedly reasoned that, if our buildup were to continue at its accelerated pace, we might conceivably reach in time a credible first-strike capability against the Soviet Union.'

Facts about the arms race

In addition to these military aspects, the modern arms race is sustained also by industrial and commercial interests. Once a new weapon is under development, costing perhaps thousands of millions of dollars, vested interests will demand its deployment, irrespective of changes in the international climate. Many organisations and millions of workers have a future in a continuation of the arms race, whatever their views are concerning the origins of the conflict.

So military and industrial interests have a stake in the pace of the arms race and, naturally, try to create the anti-Soviet hysteria needed to sustain arms expenditure. Their misinformation about Soviet military capabilities and intentions has been exposed time and time again in CND publications and, for the purposes of this article, only a few selected generalisations are pertinent:

- (a) As made clear in the 1968 McNamara quote, the US held then a substantial lead over the USSR in nuclear weapons. This nuclear superiority continues today and will persist for the foreseeable future.
- (b) Nevertheless, from about 1955, the nuclear forces of the Soviet Union have been capable of inflicting a massive destruction of the

US and her allies. This Soviet 'second strike' capability is likely to continue for the next ten years, but could be vulnerable after that time to a US 'first strike' — if some current US weapons development programmes are successful.

(c) The US/USSR military forces are more evenly balanced for non-nuclear weapons but the Soviet Union, by virtue of its geopolitical situation, has to disperse its forces more widely.

(d) All major new weapons developments have originated in the US. In many instances the weapons have been deployed even when the original justification for their development has disappeared (for example, MIRV was an answer to ABM but no one has deployed ABM systems).

(e) Third World countries at first received obsolete NATO weapons but nowadays are major recipients of advanced weapons. The arms race has accelerated in the Third World very much more in the past decade.

(f) No agreements on *disarmament* have been made since 1945; all have been partial measures of *arms control* or statements of *political intention*.

DETENTE

It is difficult to date or define detente. From 1965 to 1975 there were a number of agreements between the major powers which, collectively, often are described as detente. Prior to that the Cold War thawed from about 1955-1965. Since 1975, detente has been described as 'being in difficulties'.

Detente is a much misused word for its meaning depends very much upon the speaker's standpoint. So whilst everyone favours detente, many (sometimes contradictory) virtues are claimed for it. Furthermore, the significance and content of detente has altered with time. It has gone through a number of phases (though it has remained primarily an understanding between the two major powers, the US and the USSR), each of which has been important in different ways and to different interests, for example:

- (a) Initially there were a number of almost trivial 'confidence-building' measures (eg, the 'Hot-Line' agreement) which convinced the leaders of both the US and the USSR that neither side wanted a nuclear holocaust.
- (b) Next there were a number of moves to clear up outstanding political problems. The lead here was taken by West Germany's *Ostpolitik* policy which culminated, in 1975, with the Helsinki agreement.
- (c) The Non-Proliferation treaty and the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) were intended to control the nuclear arms race to and between the two major powers.

The differing interpretations

For the advocates of detente in the US (eg, Kissinger), detente has been an instrument of stability, designed to reduce the risk of an unwanted nuclear war and to slow political change. It has involved formal treaties and informal understandings to regulate international behaviour. Stripped of the gloss, detente has been supported in the US because it was supposed to define US and Soviet spheres of influence and would regulate areas of conflict.

For the Soviet Union, detente was welcomed as the start of a process which, it was hoped, could lead to disarmament and, eventually, to peaceful coexistence. Latterly, however, the Soviet leadership have accorded each measure much greater importance and now appear to view arms control as a desirable end in itself, whether or not it leads on to disarmament.

For Europe, detente provided the atmosphere to resolve the more important of the issues left over from the Second World War. With

the status of post-war governments and boundaries settled, trade, cultural and even ideological contact has expanded to the lasting benefit of all parties.

In the Third World detente was welcomed for the easing of international tension, but is viewed with suspicion as a two party hegemonistic deal — not only by the Chinese. The fear has been that a US/USSR agreement on 'spheres of influence' would restrict social change and preserve the power of the US and the USSR at the expense of the rest of the world.

For the peace movement the positive side of detente has been the understandings reached to regulate disputes and on several measures of arms control. Unfortunately these positive aspects have led to claims for detente which are not justified by actual events. Taken at random, the *Morning Star* of July 24 1980 suggested that: 'Detente, the settlement of problems between states by political negotiations, not by hostile confrontations backed up by displays of military force, is in the interests of humanity'.

Take out the word 'detente' and we have a statement with which few will quarrel. But the sentence, as written, defines detente as something indistinguishable from peaceful coexistence. If this is what detente means it is ludicrous to describe the past ten years as an 'era of detente'. When the peace movement seeks to 'strengthen detente', what is meant is to strengthen such progress as has been made over the past two decades to improve the international climate — no more, no less.

A coincidence of contradictory interests

The alternative interpretations of detente have been listed because they help to explain why detente has been supported by antagonistic interests. A coincidence of contradictory interests made it feasible for the US and USSR to reach temporary understandings on key issues:

(a) Nuclear War. In the early 1960s, and for the foreseeable future, no rational being could expect to benefit from a nuclear war. So the risk of war by accident or misunderstanding was reduced by the 'Hot Line' and its associated treaties. The danger of other countries obtaining nuclear weapons was reduced by the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The risk of new areas becoming involved in the nuclear arms race was reduced by the Antarctica, Outer Space and Sea-Bed Treaties.

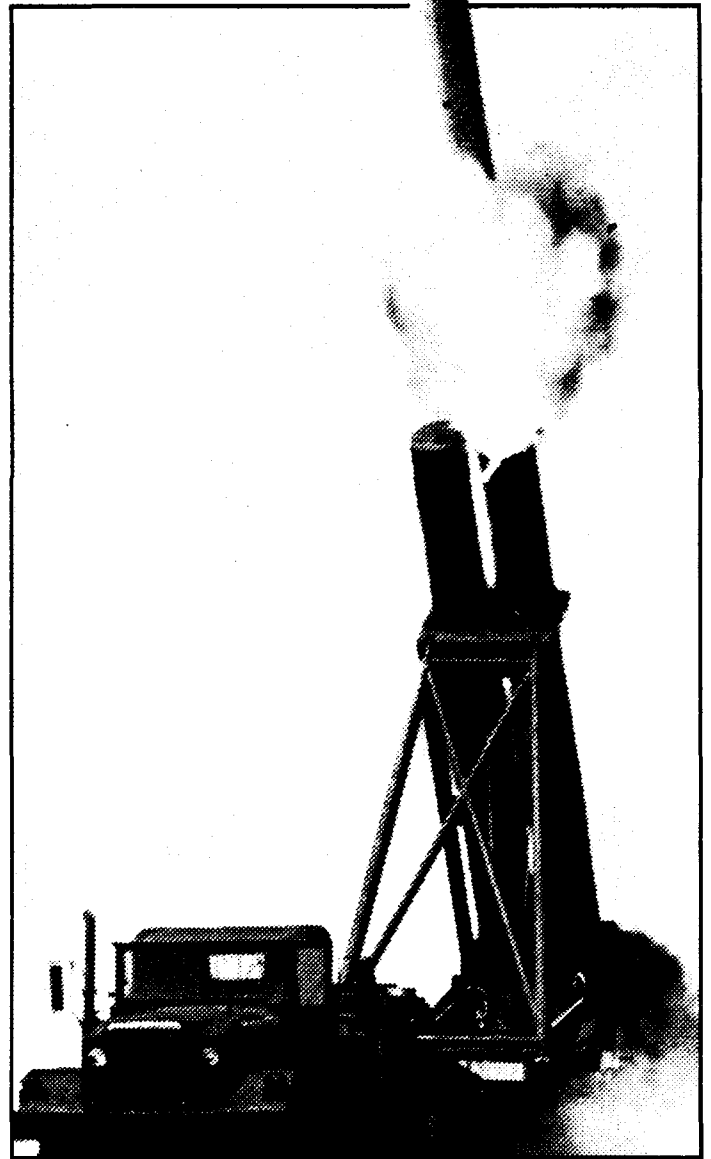
(b) State Boundaries. In the early 1960s and for the foreseeable future, it was clear that national boundaries between the socialist and capitalist camps could not be altered without risking nuclear war. *Ostpolitik*, and eventually, the Helsinki Conference, recognised the *de facto* situation in Europe and made possible substantial trading benefits to all parties.

(c) Decolonisation. The imperialist powers, with the exception of Portugal, accepted that all colonies would become independent. With the ending of this phase of national liberation, the Soviet Union was 'understood' to accept that the then existing spheres of influence would not be disturbed by outside intervention.

Whilst many commentators have dated detente from the 1962 Cuba missile crisis — and this undoubtedly did aid clear thinking about the consequences of nuclear war — the scene had been set by the establishment of stable socialist states in Eastern Europe and with the successes of the national liberation struggles. The accommodations listed above became possible because of the new world situation, not because of any change of heart. In due course detente faltered because of further changes in the world situation which exposed the limitations of detente.

ARMS CONTROL

Just as after discussing the Cold War it was useful to digress to discuss the arms race, so after discussing detente, it is illuminating to examine the limitations of arms control. This examination shows that detente



has not succeeded even in slowing the arms race to any measurable degree.

There have been several arms control agreements to not put nuclear weapons in places where no one intended putting them anyway (Antarctica, Outer Space, the Sea Bed, South America). There have been several agreements not to make any more weapons than would have been made anyway, with or without the treaties (see below for Nixon on SALT I). But no treaty has required any country to destroy a single missile, bomb, aircraft or any other weapon which was under active deployment at the time.

In the US this was not unexpected. Although influential pressure groups were opposed in principle to any restraint on the arms race, others (the more clever and devious) viewed the SALT negotiations as a device for (a) legitimising existing stocks of certain types of weapons (ICBMs, SLBMs) and (b) restricting Soviet efforts to match or, if Soviet production were to continue, to surpass US stockpiles.

An example of the latter approach was made clear by President Nixon when he commended the SALT I treaty for ratification: '... the offensive limitation (ie, ICBMs) is one that is particularly in our interest because it covers arms where the Soviet Union has on-going programmes, which will be limited in the five year period, and in which we have no on-going programme.'

Worse still, SALT I has had the side-effect of stimulating weapons'

development in areas not covered by the agreement. Because missile numbers were restricted, *but nothing else was changed*, the resources of the missile development programme were channelled into multi-warheads' development. At the time of the 1972 SALT I treaty the number of nuclear bombs each major nuclear power could deliver on the other were US 5700, USSR 2200 (note: 400 would be enough to inflict 'unacceptable damage' on either country). The warhead numbers now are 14,000 and 8,000 respectively.

Thus, in the eight years of so-called restraint, there have been more than twice as many new strategic nuclear warheads deployed than in

the 'US = USSR' school is dangerous for the peace movement

the previous twenty-five years. Moreover, in 1979, after very protracted negotiations, a new treaty has been signed (SALT II) which actually raises the acceptable ceiling for 'strategic delivery vehicles' to about 50% more than the levels the world believed had been agreed previously at Vladivostok.

As in 1972, US critics of the SALT limitations have launched an all-out attack on the new treaty. However, even if SALT II were to be ratified, the peace movement needs to assess whether these treaties and negotiations have aided progress towards disarmament — bearing in mind the following undeniable facts:

- (a) The arms race accelerated during the period of detente, whilst peace campaigning slackened.
- (b) Before each partial measure of arms control there has been frenzied competition in the shortly-to-be-controlled weapons.
- (c) After each partial measure of arms control there has been frenzied competition in the weapons left uncontrolled.
- (d) Successive agreements, though claiming to provide a basis for future disarmament, have raised the ceilings of allowable weapons.

THE BREAKDOWN OF DETENTE

If a coincidence of interests and events made detente possible, it was only to be expected that the process might falter. In order to continue, detente has to make continuous and fundamental improvements to the international situation, in order to stimulate further agreements.

Sadly the measures to date have been too superficial to affect the causes of the arms race or to influence its mechanism. In particular, the power and influence of the vested interests of the US military-industrial complex have not been curbed in any way. Detente simply increased their determination to stay in business.

By 1975, programmes for the development and deployment of the Cruise missile, the B1 bomber, the MX missile, Trident and the neutron bomb were under critical scrutiny. Even in the US it was being argued that there was no need, in the light of the relatively relaxed international situation to go ahead with these new weapons — all of which had been first mooted at least ten years previously. When the B1 bomber was cancelled it was realised that *millions* of jobs were threatened by detente. The campaign that followed was founded more on the need to preserve jobs (and companies) than on a new or imagined Soviet threat.

Without even the pretext of a deteriorating international situation, the US government proceeded with the other weapons programmes listed. This ran into unexpected stiff opposition from the peace movement in Europe, particularly with regard to the proposed development of the neutron bomb, whilst even America's NATO allies gave no more than lukewarm backing for the proposal to spend 3% more (in real terms) on armaments (which is what these weapons programmes demanded).

In addition to this *commercial* pressure for the new weapons, *military* strategists also became more vociferous. Development in anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and surveillance had raised once again a hope that nuclear war might be winnable — if a massive and highly accurate first strike could be launched against tracked targets. Technological progress was making nuclear war thinkable once more.

So, from around 1975, an acute contradiction was becoming apparent between, on the one hand, the relatively relaxed climate generated by the previous decade of US/USSR detente and, on the other hand, the needs of US military-industrial interests for a higher degree of anti-Soviet hysteria. It is important to recall this fact since political analysts who start their examination from the time of the *subsequent* anti-Soviet campaign are in danger of missing the significance of the *earlier* campaign to proceed with the weapons programme for essentially commercial reasons.

Decline of bipolarism

This is not to say that politics played no part in the breakdown of detente. The period since 1960 has been noteworthy for the collapse of the bipolar world dominated by the US and the USSR and for the rise in relative influence of Japan, China, OPEC, the EEC and the non-aligned countries. Whether they wish to or not, and irrespective of the mischievous role of the Chinese government, the US and the USSR are no longer able to make bilateral agreements without regard to these other groups.

Yet old ways of thinking die slowly. Despite the virulent anti-communism of the Ayatollah, the US government has continued to see the hand of Moscow behind their own Iranian difficulties. The US — and the USSR — have become so accustomed to a single enemy in a bipolar world that they persist in blaming the other for every setback they suffer in today's multipolar world. Moreover, as frictions develop within alliances (for example, the US/EEC differences over relations with Eastern Europe), the urge to strike an aggressive posture grows.

Add to this the changes in Soviet policies noted earlier and we have the *political* breakdown of detente. The informal 'understandings' over spheres of influence have disappeared with the interventions of the Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa and in Afghanistan and with the earlier Cuban aid to the Angolan government. This, especially the inexcusable Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, has added an element of genuine outrage to what started as an entirely synthetic and hypocritical campaign.

The main lesson from the breakdown of detente is that the useful

Technological progress was making nuclear war thinkable once more.

measures adopted in this period were entirely inadequate to deal with the forces which propel the arms race. The conclusion surely is not to press for the adoption of further inadequate measures but for the peace movement to raise its sights once again to the goal of General and Complete Disarmament previously advocated by the Soviet Union. Apart from the intrinsic merits of GCD, which have always been compelling, in a multipolar world the scope for bilateral measures of disarmament is extremely limited.

Peace campaigners have sought in vain for a convincing explanation of why the Soviet Union has seemed content, throughout the period of detente, to conclude limited and, as we have seen, often ineffective agreements with the US. The 'US = USSR' school cites this as proof that the Soviet Union never had any genuine desire for GCD and, having achieved big power status, preferred to maintain super-power hegemony. The 'Peace = USSR' either exaggerates the positive

aspects of detente and ignores previous Soviet criticisms of partial measures or, pathetically, persuade themselves that the Soviet Union still is actively pressing for GCD.

THE PEACE MOVEMENT

During the Cold War there was some basis for a peace campaign based upon support for Soviet foreign policy, because the Soviet Union was then actively campaigning for GCD and was not conducting a world-wide interventionist policy. The situation today is different and the peace movement, to be credible, must argue for certain universal standards of international behaviour. Although the 'Peace = USSR' deserves sympathy, for its approach did have relevance two or three decades ago, their efforts today are sadly misplaced.

Whereas the 'Peace = USSR' school is merely pathetic, the 'US = USSR' school is dangerous for the peace movement, firstly because it offers no hope of success for peace campaigning and secondly because it accepts many of the anti-Soviet assumptions which are used to justify increased military spending. Although anti-Soviet propaganda can be difficult to combat, and the Soviet Union sometimes adds to these problems, it is essential for the peace movement to take a principled stand against all lies and distortions which can serve the aims of the militarists.

In Britain the bellicose policies of successive governments, and the stridency with which the present Government continues the tradition, have clarified the issues. Relative to our economic strength, Britain spends more on armaments than any comparable country — and has done so for many years. Apart from France, only Britain attempts to maintain an independent nuclear force (now to reside in Trident). Unlike France, Britain plays host to numerous nuclear bases (soon to include Cruise missiles). So the core of peace campaigning in Britain is around three linked themes: 'Cut Arms Spending', 'No Trident', 'No Cruise Missiles'. A very wide unity has been achieved for this policy, marred only by the reluctance of some of the leaders of the newly-formed World Disarmament Campaign (WDC) to back what they condemn as ill-considered 'unilateralist' demands.

The WDC was founded in April 1980 at a very well-attended conference supported by peace and labour movement organisations, with CND playing a leading supporting role. Since then many local groups have been formed which, in most cases, adopt policies which are indistinguishable from those of CND groups. Unfortunately most of the respectable and non-elected leadership of the WDC is opposed in principle to making specific demands for British initiatives and places its entire emphasis on efforts to achieve multilateral disarmament treaties through the United Nations.

A strange alliance has developed between the right-wing leaders of the WDC, who are opposed to unilateralism in principle, and the left

wing 'Peace = USSR' school, who resent the implied non-alignment of CND policies. Implicitly, the mainstream of peace campaigning is against military associations with either the US or the USSR, since neither, in practice, has shown much respect for the independence and traditions even of its allies during the past two decades.

CND

CND is for the mutual dissolution of the NATO and Warsaw Pacts and also for GCD. But, failing the achievement of these multilateral

must expose the limitations of the largely cosmetic arms control agreements

measures, CND campaigns for British withdrawal from NATO and for an end to all British involvement in the nuclear arms race. This is non-alignment without doubt — but is no more an opting out of international responsibilities, as critics from both the Left and Right suggest, than is the positive non-alignment of countries such as India, Yugoslavia and even Cuba.

CND is also an integral component of the European Nuclear Disarmament Campaign (END), whose declaration in favour of a European nuclear-free zone has been signed, with appropriate reservations, by the Communist Party. Although this declaration has been written to appeal also to the 'US = USSR' school, and makes at times transparent efforts to be even-handed in its proposals, the main thrust of its campaigning is against the NATO powers since they, unlike the Warsaw Pact countries, are the ones who are resolutely opposed to any measure of disarmament.

Whilst the peace movement has achieved a wide measure of agreement to campaign for unilateral, partial and general measures of disarmament (involving END, local groups of the WDC as well as CND), there is much less enthusiasm for campaigns in favour of measures of arms control. Obviously, peace campaigners cannot oppose arms control, however trivial or irrelevant particular measures may be. But there is a growing realisation that the succession of widely-publicised yet superficial arms control treaties has weakened peace campaigning by fostering illusions that the arms race was slowing.

Some of these illusions arose as a hangover from the days when the 'Peace = USSR' school was more influential in the peace movement: any treaty the Soviet Union signs, so the argument would go, must be good for peace — ignoring the counter-argument often used by the same people, that anything the US does must be bad. The peace movement in Britain needs to make its own decisions on such issues and, inevitably, must expose the limitations of the largely cosmetic arms control agreements reached during the period of detente.

The reawakening

One hopeful side-effect of the media's current anti-Soviet campaign has been to reawaken concern in Britain about the nuclear arms race. This has been expressed strongly in the labour movement and it is noteworthy that peace and disarmament has displaced even unemployment as a topic for debate at this year's Labour Party conference. The decision of the Labour Party NEC to back CND's October 26th demonstration, and the declaration of the British Council of Churches in opposition to the replacement of Polaris, are indications of the breadth of support that can be achieved. The peace movement today is in a strong position to mount effective activities against government actions, with CND, having maintained its organisation and matured its policies in the lean years of peace campaigning, in the forefront of the forthcoming campaigns. □

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Gordon McLennan

What Kind of Fightback?

Unemployment and deindustrialisation are a profound threat: how do we fight them?

Fifteen months of Thatcher's government has born out the Communist Party's pre-General Election estimate that it would be the most reactionary government for decades. The consequences of Tory economic policies, including their support for EEC policies, have been grim for millions of workers and their families, and the results for Britain's economy extremely damaging.

In foreign affairs the Tories have proved themselves to be the foremost protagonist of American military policies in Europe, energetically campaigning for the siting of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Britain and Western Europe, and insisting on the replacement of Polaris with Trident missiles, costing £5 billion.

The latter has been justified, as has the general increase in arms expenditure in the past year, by deliberate misrepresentation of the foreign and military policies of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact powers. A misrepresentation that has been accompanied by bitterly hostile and widespread anti-Soviet propaganda.

Support for reactionary, racist and fascist regimes throughout the world has been underlined by the decision to supply arms to Chile, following on resumption of diplomatic relations.

At the heart of the Government's wide-ranging attack on democratic rights is the aim to cripple the fighting capacity of the trade unions, which the Tories recognise as the major obstacle to the carrying out of their strategy, but also especially threatened are women's rights and the rights of black people.

Since the General Election, the fight-back against Tory policies has been impressive and growing, but not without difficult problems which have tended to hold back the full mobilisation in action of the wide range of forces reacting against Tory policies.

The limited scope of this short article is to make some points about the fight-back on a few of the big social and economic issues that will be before the trade union movement in the coming months, having in mind some of the problems of the anti-Tory struggle, and the importance of what happens in the trade union movement to anti-Tory action by other forces. Also, we will look briefly at the relationship of these developments to the debate on democracy and accountability in the Labour Party and the general political situation in the country.

May 14

The high point of the campaign against Tory policies since the General Election was the Day of Action called by the General Council of the TUC on May 14. Specifically political in its declaration of opposition to Tory policies and in its demand for a change in course, the Day of Action met with a barrage of hostile, vicious propaganda from the Government and mass media. That 'The Day' was successful to the degree it was, owed a very great deal to the campaign waged for

it in the trade union movement by the Left, especially on the shop floor, in which the role of the *Morning Star* was outstanding. Indeed, it can be said that without the *Morning Star* the campaign for May 14 would have been without a critical factor in determining its success. Yet appreciation of all that was done and achieved, including the splendid marches, meetings and other activities must not obscure certain problems that stood in the way of winning an even greater response from trade unionists and the wider public. Of course, there could have been more decisive leadership from the top in some unions, and the parliamentary leaders of the Labour Party were almost totally silent in face of the media's onslaught. But right-wing foot dragging within the trade union movement or the absence of any real support from Callaghan, Healey & Co, does not fully explain why millions of trade unionists did not respond to the General Council's call. It is clear that part of the reason was confusion spread by the media, which reported every decision by workers against strike action as a revolt against trade union leadership. But also there is little doubt that some trade unionists, as well as other workers, have been affected by anti-union propaganda. There were others who didn't see how stopping work for a day or half a day to join in a demonstration would help in the fight against unemployment and the cuts, while there are those who have either been won to the view that what the Government is doing is maybe necessary, or who don't feel strongly enough about it to take action against it.

The fact that the TUC leadership made the call for the Day of Action, especially because it involved taking industrial action for political ends, was an important thing, but one of the biggest lessons of May 14 is the need to follow up decisions at the top by intensive campaigning in workplaces and trade union branches, especially where right-wing influence is strong, to explain and win understanding and support for progressive decisions of the labour movement. It is a lesson that will need to be learnt quickly and put into practice in the fight against unemployment, which is now a major political issue.

A Gallup Poll in July indicated that those polled considered unemployment the most urgent problem facing Britain. Since then, unemployment has moved beyond two million, and some forecasts predict 2½ million unemployed in 1981 and 3 million in 1982.

Similar mass unemployment is affecting the entire capitalist world. The 24-nation Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recorded in July that next year there would be 23 million unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries and, within this, unemployment for those aged between 16-24 years would average 14%. 'But the most severe deterioration', it said (in youth unemployment — GM) 'is forecast for the United Kingdom, where the youth unemployment rate by 1981 is expected to be 75% above its level in 1979'. These figures help to make the point that while mass unemployment is, in general, a product of capitalist crisis, which is particularly deep in our country, the nature and scope of unemployment in Britain is in great measure a result of policies being pursued by the Tory government.

Concern about the consequences of mass unemployment is not confined to those thrown on the dole queues and their families, or to organisations of the working class and progressive movement. There is also a lot of uneasiness, even alarm, amongst traditional supporters of the Tory Party, and it was given expression in a *Sunday Times* editorial in July. 'It is doubtful', it said, 'if British society could take 3 million unemployed without great risk to social and political order'.

The chairman of the West Midland Region of the CBI also gave voice to fears amongst employers about the consequences of government policies for industry, when he said recently: 'There is a great deal of talk about the phoenix rising from the ashes, but what if all we are left with is just the ashes?'

Neither the *Sunday Times* nor the CBI nor those whose interests they mainly represent will make the necessary fight against mass unemployment. The main responsibility for that rests quite clearly with the mass organisations of the working people, the trade unions, hundreds of thousands of whose members are already unemployed, while the jobs of hundreds of thousands of other trade unionists are threatened. But these statements indicate the breadth of forces that could be ranged alongside the trade union movement against government policies, in the fight against unemployment.

Fighting unemployment

A first position of the fight against unemployment must be to win a greater degree of militant opposition amongst trades unionists to lay-offs and closures. The tenacity, solidarity and vision that was exemplified in the UCS work-in at the beginning of the 70s is needed everywhere today, though a victory such as that won on the Clyde will be infinitely more difficult to achieve because of the new conditions in which these struggles will take place. But, basic attitudes of that struggle — the right to work; refusal to sell jobs; the setting out of alternative work proposals by the organisation of workers faced with the sack; the winning of maximum support in the movement as a whole and in the community — need to be advocated wherever there is the threat of lay-offs and closures. Many thousands of jobs could be saved if this type of fight is made. The UCS example in itself, of course, makes the case for a bigger Communist Party, for if each industry or enterprise faced with closures and sackings had a membership of the Communist Party proportionate to the size of the Communist Party in the UCS, it is more likely that the necessary fight would be made.

Every time a job is permanently saved, insofar as this is possible in capitalist society, it not only keeps a worker out of the dole queue, but provides the future prospect of a job for a young worker. This is one vital way in which the fight against youth unemployment can be conducted by the unions. But alongside that must go action for defence and extension of the Youth Opportunities Programme and proposals for other government initiatives to provide jobs with training and skill for young people leaving school. This type of approach by the trade union movement in relation to youth unemployment needs to be undertaken as an expression of its natural concern for young people, and supplemented by activities which bring young people into discussion and action with the unions. The other, and longer-term dimension of this question, in terms of the general interests of society, is that when economic recovery is won there could be grave problems through the lack of skilled workers, if the present position in relation to youth unemployment is allowed to continue and deteriorate.

The trade union movement must also take serious note of the Tory campaign aimed at persuading some unemployed workers to volunteer to work for less wages than they would normally work for, and the floating of the idea by Thatcher and other leading Tories that unemployed workers, particularly young unemployed workers, might act as strike-breakers in industrial disputes. These concepts give added urgency to an aspect of the fight against unemployment that is beginning to get the attention of the trade union movement — namely, the more active involvement of unemployed workers in the fight for jobs and in the anti-Tory struggle. This increased attention is welcome, especially as there are very difficult problems presented to the unions in tackling this issue. One question increasingly coming up is whether there should be the formation of a national unemployed workers' movement. Obviously, with about nine unemployed workers for every job vacancy and chronic long-term unemployment increasing, the formation of such an organisation is a valid and urgent question for discussion in the labour movement.

There is also a discussion opening up on the possibilities and basis

for recruiting unemployed workers not in trade unions into an appropriate union. It seems to me that this question is one for collective discussion between unions, under the aegis of the TUC, so that it does not become a sphere for inter-union conflict.

But, bringing unemployed workers into action alongside workers at present in jobs must not await the outcome of these discussions. Wherever unions are conducting action against unemployment, they should appeal wherever possible to unemployed workers to join in these actions, an appeal that will get a more receptive ear if the unions are also championing the case for higher benefits for those who are unemployed and campaigning against Tory Social Security Bills aimed at cutting benefits.

does not fully explain why millions of trade unionists did not respond to the TUC call.

The TUC General Council is calling a conference of affiliated organisations in the autumn to discuss how to change Tory policies that are deliberately creating unemployment. If that conference, or the September TUC, as one of its decisions, decided to organise a great national demonstration against unemployment, and made an appeal to unemployed workers throughout Britain to participate in it, it would give a big impetus to the anti-Tory struggle, and be a good first step at that level in making unemployment the kind of central issue it needs to become for the unions and for British politics.

De-industrialisation

The Welsh TUC had a mass demonstration against unemployment some months ago, which laid the basis for a continuing campaign that has gone on since, and was given further powerful expression when Thatcher spoke at the Welsh Tory Party Conference in July. What has happened, and is threatened in Wales, with at present 10.6% unemployment, foreshadows what could take place elsewhere in Britain if unemployment mounts to 3 million — de-industrialisation on a massive scale.

The Tories aim to finish with steel-making as a major industry in Wales, involving the loss of 20,000 jobs. This could mean the closure of 12 coking coal pits which supply the steel industry and employ 7,000 miners. But that is not the only catastrophe facing the Welsh coalfield. It is estimated that if coal imports continue to mount, another 21 pits and 15,000 jobs would be at risk, decimating the coalfield. Closures in steel and coal on such a scale could wipe out another 20,000 jobs in dependent enterprises, and the total results for many communities in Wales would be socially and financially disastrous.

Few parts of Britain are so dependent on these two basic industries which are under the Tory and EEC hammer as is South Wales. But with the 8% drop in manufacturing output in the 12 months since the General Election, the sharp contraction in industries such as textiles and shipbuilding, then the same process of de-industrialisation is widely evident. The unemployment average for the UK at the time of writing is 7.8% (this includes Northern Ireland with 14.7%), but Northern England has 11.4%; Scotland 10.6% and the North West 10.5%. And within each of these, there are areas suffering particularly severely from the closure of major industries and factories.

The West Midlands, in which big factories and offices of British Leyland are situated, does not have as high a percentage of unemployment as some other regions of England. This could rapidly change if the Edwardes' Plan for British Leyland — 'Monetarism in One Company' — becomes fully operative. Leyland shop stewards warned last year that the outcome of this plan could be destruction of

which takes on new importance and urgency as Britain accelerates towards slump and depression.

the publicly-owned sector of the British car industry, with the loss of 165,000 jobs in British Leyland itself, and a further 280,000 jobs in companies supplying components to BL.

Thus, the fate of the small and medium firms which supply BL could be the same as that now being experienced by hundreds of small and medium firms throughout Britain — liquidation and bankruptcy. A survey of nearly 2,000 manufacturers published by the CBI on July 29 reported that 'Business confidence which has been ebbing strongly since October has plummeted in the past 3 months'.

The owners, shareholders, directors, managers and skilled workers of such firms were said to be one of the pillars on which Thatcher built her electoral success in May 1979. If it was such a pillar it could now be crumbling. A director of a small precision-engineering firm in Birmingham, which increased profits and turnover ten-fold since 1968, and has now laid off skilled workers on the grounds of collapsing orders at home and abroad, probably echoed the sentiments of thousands of his contemporaries when he said: 'I support the Government's policies and I think they have taken very courageous actions. The only trouble is that the medicine is quietly killing the patient.'

In a situation where Britain for the first time in its history is importing more manufactured goods than it exports, and there is ever-growing opposition to the EEC, the working class movement could win to its side many thousands of the middle strata of society — small business people, managers, technicians and others in manufacturing industries and in publicly-owned industry being hived off by the Tories — if it campaigned for selective import controls, lower interest rates, defence and expansion of publicly-owned industry, withdrawal from the EEC and expansion of the economy.

These, of course, are key elements of the alternative political and economic strategy of the Left, which takes on new importance and urgency as Britain accelerates towards slump and depression.

Alternatives

In a TV interview in July about that month's massive unemployment figures, the Prime Minister argued that the alternative to increased unemployment was rocketing inflation, and that to get inflation down was the Government's priority. She took the same line in the subsequent parliamentary debate.

Thus, in the name of fighting the inflation for which it is largely responsible, the Government is plunging the country into a disastrous slump, sending the unemployment figures sky high, wrecking the social services, dismembering the nationalised industries, reducing living standards and de-industrialising Britain. Surely a case of the cure being worse than the disease. For even if the rate of inflation is somewhat reduced as a result of Tory measures, and many commentators have reservations on how far and how quickly it will come down, millions of workers will still be worse off than they are now, while the damage done to the economy will be severe.

An economic survey, printed in the *Guardian* in June, estimated that inflation would continue to run at 14% through 1981, and only get down to 11½% in 1982, ie, about 1½ times what it was when the Tories were elected! The same survey then went on to say: 'The price of this limited success against inflation will be a terrible slump. National output is expected to fall by 3½% this year, by 5% in 1981; and then to remain unchanged in 1982: a decline of 8¼% from the 1979 peak'.

The real alternative however, to both mass unemployment and

rocketing inflation, is a political and economic strategy that will take Britain on a different course from that undertaken by the Tories. Thatcher, and Callaghan during his premiership, have taken the position that such an alternative strategy does not exist, ignoring all the work the Left, including the parliamentary Left, has done in developing such a strategy, work in which the Communist Party played a pioneering role.

But, more important in the final analysis than Thatcher and Callaghan's 'blind eye', is the fact that component parts of the Left's alternative strategy are now the policies of the whole labour movement, and increasingly, sections of the movement are adopting the strategy as a whole. This is a key question when estimating future political trends, for implementation of the Left's strategy involves a major step in the direction of a 'fundamental shift in wealth and power', and in this sense is a counter-strategy to that of the Government, which aims not only to maintain the present distribution of wealth and power, but to shift it even more decisively in the interests of monopoly capital and its agencies.

While the alternative strategy has been winning ground over a long period in the labour movement and amongst sections of the population actively interested in the great political issues of the day, it's had insufficient impact on the mass of the people. The Thatcher-Callaghan line, as above, and a virtual black-out by the mass media, do not satisfactorily explain this situation. Another factor is the inadequacies of the public fight for the strategy and the development of derivative policies in industries, workplaces and communities that would make the national alternative strategy much more meaningful to millions of people.

But new developments here are worth noting. An example of the kind of job that can be done has been provided by NUPE, in their campaigning against cuts in the social and public services, where they have related the cuts to the massive and increasing military expenditure. The present campaigns of major unions in relation to import controls is a similarly important initiative. The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation's *Plan for Steel* opposes BSC's strategy for the industry and, at another level, the Leyland Combine Stewards developed a counter-strategy for BL to that embodied in the Edwardes' Plan. And more pamphlets are being produced, eg, on import controls by the TASS section of the AUEW; *Textiles and Clothing* by the Transport and General Workers Union; and *Enough is Enough*, produced by the Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee. A Communist Party pamphlet on the EEC is similarly useful. Also, in many parts of the country in anti-cuts campaigning (dealt with in earlier *Marxism Today* articles), local committees of trade unions, trades councils and community organisations are presenting alternative plans for their cities and communities, which are predicated on the basis of rejecting the case for cuts in social and public services.

This process of creative application of the alternative political and economic strategy at every level of political struggle, and many more examples than those given above could be instanced, needs to be further developed and ever greater emphasis given to the inter-relationship of the component points of it. At this moment, when such great weight, and correctly so, is being put on the issue of import controls, there could be a tendency to overstate the effects of the application of this one demand of the alternative strategy, which of itself, will not resolve the problems of manufacturing industry, far less of Britain's economy. The alternative political and economic strategy must always be seen as a whole and fought for as a whole, otherwise, there could be illusions about what could be achieved by winning isolated demands of the strategy. It also needs to be consistently stressed that the aim of the alternative strategy is not only to tackle the deep rooted problems of the economy, but to start changing the



balance of class and political forces in the country necessary for longer-term socialist change.

Wages and anti-union legislation

A critical aspect of the alternative strategy is the expansion of the economy through increasing the purchasing power of wages, salaries and benefits. The Government, in contrast, is determined to force down wages. 'Pay negotiators everywhere', said the Chancellor of the Exchequer earlier this year, 'must realise that it will not be possible in the year ahead to provide for earnings to increase at a rate that can begin to compare with inflation over the past year'. And Thatcher, in the parliamentary debate at the end of July, said that 'trade unions have been demanding, and too often getting for their members, increases which their employers could not afford'. These kinds of statements are made on the background of the fact that wages rose less than prices last year and that average take-home pay in the six months to April, declined by 1.3%. It is clear from these and other figures that unless there are further large increases in pay, living standards could fall substantially. Yet the Tory aim for wage increases is to get them down to 10% or less. Initial blows for their wage cutting policies are being struck in the public sector, where, according to figures quoted in the *Guardian* at the end of July, a 10% wage increase would mean a cut in real wages of at least 7%. As resistance grows in the public sector to government wage cutting policies, all the anti-union stops will be pulled out by the mass media, as in the so-called 'Winter of Discontent'. Unremitting pressure will meanwhile be put on local authorities to implement government policies, and where they don't, Heseltine will use statutory powers to bring them into line, powers to be greatly strengthened by the new Tory Local Government Bill.

Of course, the public sector will not be alone in the struggle for higher wages. Other unions have made clear their determination to maintain and advance the purchasing power of wages, and the Government will not be easily able to fulfil Thatcher's declared intention of getting 'wage costs down'. But mass unemployment will be a weapon that will be used to the maximum by the Government in this battle, and to win the wage increases necessary to maintain and advance living standards, and expand the economy, a great wages offensive is needed, combining militant action and a big battle of ideas, both within the trade union movement and wider afield.

The conducting of this offensive on wages will be a big test of leadership at all levels in the trade union movement, as will be the fight to kill Prior's anti-union Bill. The miners' resolution to the September TUC expresses the spirit and determination that will be necessary in the coming confrontation on anti-union legislation. It calls on the TUC General Council 'to mount a campaign of non-cooperation with the Government, including, if necessary, industrial action'. This is the position the TUC should take. And, if the power of the trade union movement is used in the way the resolution envisages, Prior's Bill and the draft codes on picketing and the closed shop will suffer the same fate as previous Tory legislation in the field.



Left/Right struggle in the unions and Labour's debate

Over a long time the trade unions have carried out an enormously important job of work on industrial and social questions that benefit many millions outside their ranks, and they are increasingly developing policies and action on wider political and democratic issues, including women's rights, national liberation and peace, though there is a long way to go till all unions are equally and sufficiently active on the wider issues. The distance between what has been achieved and what is still to be achieved, in regard to unions playing the fullest possible role in the progressive development of society, will not be shortened by critical generalities about trade unions and their leaders. The reality of the unions in their great diversity of experience, development, policy and structure must be taken into account. And, it also must be recognised that ever since they were formed there has been a continuous left-right struggle in the unions, the outcome of which can have a big influence on the exercise of the fighting capacity of unions on behalf of their own members and for left change in society. In speaking here of left-right struggle, I don't mean just in relation to positions at the top or to full time officers' positions at all levels in the unions, though both are important, but of the general left-right struggle at all levels, which is integrally bound up with the level of social and political consciousness amongst trade unionists.

The great question, as far as the unions are concerned, for all progressive forces, is to help forward the left advance in the unions won in post war years. This left advance is the key reason for the greater role unions now play in social and political affairs in the country and their greater contribution to left change in the Labour Party.

Interacting with this left advance in the unions, and its impact on the Labour Party, has been the change, though not to the same degree, in the Parliamentary Labour Party, with more left MPs actively associated with the extra-parliamentary struggle. The result of this interaction has produced a shift to the left in the Labour Party, reflected in the policy decisions of the Party, in some of the political campaigning of the Labour Party and in the decisions of last year's Labour Party Conference on democratic control and accountability in the Party.

Since last year's Labour Party Conference voted in favour of the automatic reselection of MPs and for the Executive Committee to have control of the Manifesto, many hours have been spent in Labour's leadership, and in the Commission of Inquiry, discussing what to do about these decisions and in attempting to find an acceptable formula for an electoral college that will elect the Party leader. These discussions have in turn been the subject of widespread discussion in other sections of the labour movement. The mass media, consistent with its general anti-labour movement bias, has given maximum publicity to the divisions and differences within the Labour leadership on these issues, arguing that this shows how unfit Labour is to govern, and using every opportunity to pillory the Left in

the Labour Party Executive Committee and in union leaderships who are fighting for the carrying through of Labour Party Conference decisions.

Callaghan has taken a different line, but one that also feeds hostility to the Left. In a number of speeches he has striven to give the impression that he is impatient with the discussions in the LPEC and the Commission of Inquiry, because they take up time that should be devoted to the fight against the Tories. The reality, of course, is that he has little enthusiasm for anything other than parliamentary shadow-boxing with the Tories, and his impatience is with those members of the LPEC and trade union leaders who are fighting tenaciously for the carrying out of the wishes of the Labour Party Conference in relation to more effective control of Labour MPs, Labour's parliamentary leadership and Labour's election manifesto. This is not, as some in the labour movement argue, something to be attended to once the Tories are defeated. The issue of democratic control and accountability is inextricably bound up with the anti-Tory fight.

A new stage

If there was greater confidence amongst the rank and file of the labour movement and amongst millions of Labour voters that the next General Election manifesto would not be deguited by right wing Labour leaders, as the last one was, and that Labour MPs and a Labour government emerging from the election would carry out Party policy, and not act in violation of it, as Callaghan, Healey and other MPs did in the winter of 78/79, the whole anti-Tory fight would take on a greater degree of enthusiasm and confidence. But these questions of democratic control and accountability relate to even more fundamental issues than the anti-Tory fight. They reflect a stage of development in the Labour Party where it is recognised that it is no longer good enough for Labour Party Conferences to pass resolutions on policy, if Labour governments are going to ignore and act in defiance of these policies when they are in government. At stake here, in the debate on these issues, is the winning of Labour governments of a new type, governments that, acting on the basis of labour movement

so that millions of people are given a new
confidence that there is a credible
Labour alternative to the Tory
government.

policy, will begin to shift the balance of wealth and power in Britain in the direction of the working people. This is why Callaghan and the right wing are fighting so bitterly and determinedly on these questions. They clearly understand what is at stake, and the Owen-Williams-Rodgers document underlines this.

It cannot be said too often in the labour movement in the days ahead, that the discussions within the Labour Party on these democratic issues, rather than being dampened down or pushed under the carpet, must embrace all labour movement organisations and, if possible, brought to a successful conclusion at the Labour Party Conference.

Callaghan is said to be confident of reversing last year's decisions on the basis that the AEUW (Engineering Section) will vote differently from last year. If that outcome is secured, the right wing will then probably urge that the discussions on democratic control be kept out of Labour's National Conference for the next three years. The Labour Party Executive has already rejected this line, and so should the Conference. For whatever the outcome of the October Conference on these issues, they will need to be the subject of further discussion in the labour movement, at the same time as the movement faces up to

the great challenge represented in the policies and actions of the Tory government led by Thatcher.

Thatcher's General Election victory marked a more serious shift to the right than that represented in the defeat of Labour governments and the return of Tory governments in previous post-war elections. Britain's crisis is deeper and more profound than ever previously and the strategy set out in the Tory General Election manifesto, and fought for ruthlessly since, aims to decisively strengthen monopoly capital and the state and in the process rob the working people of social and democratic gains won in generations of struggle.

It is true that there are divisions within the Tory Party and ruling class and that these are likely to intensify as the monetarist policies of the government fail to meet the requirements of sections of industry and commerce and their representatives in the Tory Party.

The task of the labour movement is to deepen these divisions and make greater difficulties for Thatcher in her own ranks by stepping up the fight against government policies and winning further millions of people to a position of political opposition to the Government.

Political conclusions drawn by electors from experience of Tory policies over 15 months and the fightback against them, have been reflected in parliamentary by-elections, May's local elections and numerous local by-elections. These show a shift away from the Tories and back to Labour compared with the General Election, but nothing like as decisive a shift as might have been expected given the ferocity of the Tory attack.

Therefore in a sense they are a warning to the labour movement, especially to those in the movement who think there will be an automatic swing back to Labour, and eventually to a Labour government, as unemployment mounts towards 3 million, living standards are reduced, democratic rights further restricted and peace threatened. This is an illusion. With the aid of the mass media, which is largely at the service of the Tory Party and not the labour movement, certainly not the Left, the Thatcherites will continue to spread political confusion amongst working people, convincing some, even as they are attacked by Tory policy, that 'social and economic recovery' demands the kind of overall measures to which the government has set its hand. All that has happened in the past 15 months argues that to decisively shift political support in the country back to Labour and the labour movement, will demand a political and ideological offensive by the labour movement based on policies to be decided at the September TUC and the October Labour Party Conference so that millions of people are given a new confidence that there is a credible Labour alternative to the Tory government. The bias of the mass media makes this a difficult though not an impossible task, but the fact that the mass media's bias has to be overcome, gives point to the 'Campaign For Press Freedom' being conducted by sections of the labour movement and to winning a bigger circulation for the *Morning Star*, *Tribune* and *Labour Weekly*.

The Communist Party will make its unique contribution in all of this, working with others on the Left and in the labour and democratic movement, to unite all those reacting against Tory policies into an alliance that can force a General Election and create conditions for a new type of Labour government that will be committed to putting Britain on a new course.

Much remains to be done to overcome the weaknesses in the work of the Communist Party drawn attention to at the last National Congress of the Party. But limitations are also placed on the contribution to the labour movement and anti-Tory struggle by the size of the Party's membership and scale of its resources. This is why the building of the Communist Party and the YCL, especially of workplace branches of the Communist Party, is a vital question for grasping the opportunities and resolving some of the problems referred to in this article. □

Where are we now?

A Roundtable Discussion

The Participants

Jacky Atkin (JyA)

Active in the Birmingham women's movement and a member of the Communist Party Executive Committee.

Jack Adams (JA)

Convenor, BL, Longbridge, and Secretary of the Leyland Combine.

Alan Baker (AB)

Secretary, Oakdale Lodge, National Union of Mineworkers.

Bill Innes (BI)

Shop steward at Plastona, Leeds AUEW District Committee (engineering section) and member of the Communist Party Executive Committee.

Jeff Rodrigues (JR)

Member of the Section Executive Committee of the Society of Civil and Public Servants. Active in Lambeth Fightback Campaign.

THATCHERISM

JR I think one of the problems in saying whether the Thatcher government is new or not, whether or not it marks a break with previous governments, Labour or Conservative, is that this Government seems to be in two parts. It seems to have an objective of what it wants to do, but you sometimes question how effective they actually are in practice in making a break with the past. But if you look at it politically and in terms of the ideology they put forward then I think there is a definite break between this Government and previous governments. Conservative governments in the past have tended to do

things and operate in a principally pragmatic way. This Government is very different from that. Virtually everything they do seems to have an ideological effect. The attack on the Health Service goes hand in hand with privatisation of health. The attack on the social services goes hand in hand with saying women should go back to the home and have a more caring role. That is on one level.

On another level, I have noticed among workers I work with who voted Conservative that quite a lot are staying Conservative because they feel that this Government is tackling things that they themselves feel are important — like law and order and immigration. Issues which they have actually thought about and relate to. In a sense this Government is doing what we should be doing, starting from peoples' experiences.

I'm not saying that they are doing it the right way, but I think they have a very different practice. In other words I think this Government comes across much more ideologically than previous governments and I think that is the first break it's making, and the second type is that it does this in a very positive sort of manner.

BI I have been trying to put my thoughts together on this and I think it would probably be true to say that this present Tory government is, in a whole number of very important ways, different from previous post-war governments — Tory or whatever. But we have to go a bit further than that, not just say yes it's different because it does this or it does that. We've got to really look at why the difference, what's throwing up this phenomenon, why we've got this rabid right wing Tory government that can win people on radical right wing policies. And we've got to get to the root of that before we can start to properly answer the questions and counter the problem.

The first thing we've got to look at is that to a certain extent the type of government we've got, the type of Tory government we've got now, reflects the changes in capitalist society itself in Britain, the deepening crisis of capitalism in Britain. Now during the period of the last Labour government, and in particular the latter stages of that government, there was a definite feeling of crisis that people started to experience. And they are experiencing it far more now. I get the impression fairly vividly from the lads and lasses on the shop floor that they have got a feeling of crisis. I think that's quite new. Probably for most of the postwar years there has been a feeling that things could be better,

The roundtable was held in Birmingham on July 5, and organised by Martin Jacques, who edited the transcript.

but there has never been that feeling that things are closing in around us and I think that's starting to happen now.

It's also being encouraged by the press. You know on the question of immigration, unemployment — the people that won't work, inflation. All these sorts of things that have started to generate that feeling. People actually feel that there is a crisis, more so than there has been in my experience in the movement. You've got people convinced that there is a fairly desperate situation and it's that much easier to get fairly desperate measures accepted.

But there is very little feeling of it being a capitalist crisis, so people don't look for an alternative to capitalism, they're looking for answers still within a capitalist system. So we end up with that situation where we've had a Labour government which has carried out the traditional role of Labour governments in the past, of trying to manage capitalism that bit better than Tories can manage capitalism, and failing miserably. And when it came to the General Election situation they offered more of the same thing to the people. Now the Tories didn't do that. What the Tories did was take up policies in the same vein and I think this is where there is a change in policy, there's a change in the type of government, but there's a thread that runs through it. It's not been broken. Because the blame for everything still lays at the same door. Trade unionists, you know the greedy worker. Blacks pouring in and taking all our jobs. The social services eating up all the money that should be put into industry. All this sort of stuff gets put over. I mean apart from possibly Labour not using the blacks and racialism to a great degree all the other things in one way or another have been used by Labour ministers.

The Tories have grasped the possibility of being able to push politics to the right based on a sort of consensus of politics between Labour and Tory that's taken place in postwar years where there's been no attempt to put a radical alternative from the Left, from the labour movement. They've now finally, before we've had a chance, grasped the opportunity that was there. And obviously things were far more favourable for them because, as I say, you've got a situation where people are feeling there's a crisis, and they're still looking for answers within a capitalist system.

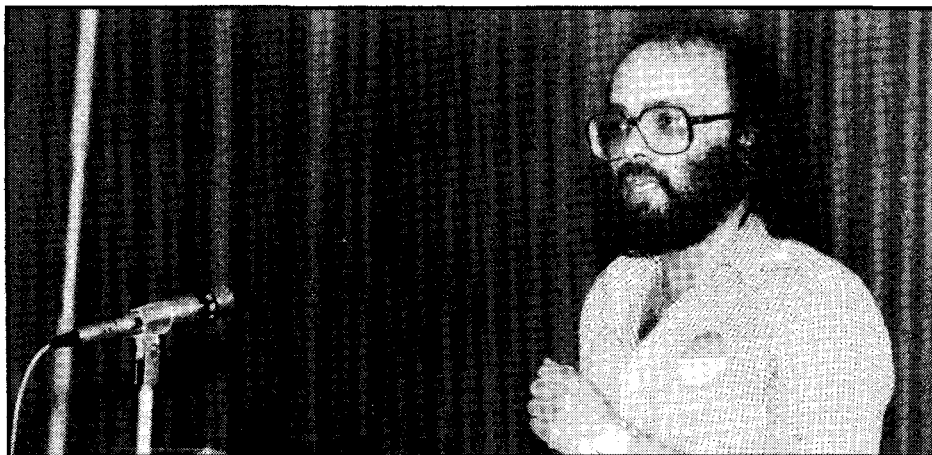
I must say though I think we are at a crossroads as far as Britain is concerned. I don't think that politics or the economy could have gone on the way they've been going on under Wilson, Heath and Callaghan. Economic circumstances and political circumstances couldn't have allowed for that.

There has to be a break from that and really what we've got now is the Tories taking the initiative and moving radically to the right. They caught a certain amount of imagination and used a lot of bigotry, clapped out ideas about what the problems are about, and won the sort of support that brought them into office.

JYA I'm not sure whether that sort of idea is clapped out or not. I think they've always been around but I don't think they're clapped out. I remember in the 60s arguments about council tenants and people having smart cars outside them.

It reminds me of a woman I work with and during the last election I said to her what are you going to vote Sue and she said I'm not going to tell you because all the others have put me down about it. I said go on, I won't

Jeff Rodrigues



say anything and she told me I'm going to vote Tory. I said 'oh are you' but nothing else since she was really vulnerable because of the people around her and she is really a smashing woman. But she's got a thing about people in council houses who've got two cars parked outside and about racism and what have you. Since the election her life has been crumbling. They are financially in incredible difficulties. Her husband has lost his job. They've got a bit of money and they managed to live a certain style and it's really crushing her. She's had a baby and she's working full-time. She complains all the time but the one thing she doesn't do is talk about the fact that she voted Tory and all I can think of from that is that she's still with them in one way but you have to suffer this private way of dealing with things because the whole of the country's in crisis so you know you've just got to struggle along.

I think the thing about the Tories now is that they've been absolutely brilliant about individualism, that you look after yourself in

the best way you possibly can and you make way under your own steam. That's where they've been successful. Now that's not new. Those ideas have been around as long as I can remember. But it is new to have a government express them as severely and as openly as this one.

I'm in teaching and it is so depressing. The teachers are really depressed, about redeploying, about no prospects, about the cuts and what have you. There's a silence, an incredible silence and depression. Within my school people are just entrenching, looking after yourself. It's a really individualistic sort of thing, survival and you'll be OK.

JA The difference as I see it has been really covered. But I think that their appeal is purely because they are radical, and people, whatever the suffering, see them as radical

natured, and strategically radical. They see that whatever the suffering, whatever the problems, that here at last is a once and for all way of solving our problems and, despite what is happening now, I haven't witnessed a big swing against the Tories. They're hanging in with them. I think they'll hang on in with them because of the openly radical way they're tackling the situation and that's where their appeal is. I don't think there's any doubt at all about that.

I think we've missed several opportunities, especially towards the end of the Callaghan government, where, although we made big campaigns on free collective bargaining, we never did anything on the political basis of that time. If you mount single issue campaigns, and somebody comes out with a far more radical approach, they are going to be attracted by that. It's been very powerful. Stand up for yourself. You can do it. This is going to solve all our problems. Even the line that the free market will solve all your individual problems is quite effective. And

people are still hanging on in there and it's absolutely amazing that people can swallow such bullshit but they are you know. So there is a clear difference I think certainly with the Heath government. Strategically there might not have been a lot of difference, but it's the way that strategy's been projected compared with the Heath one. There's no pretence now, coming to the kind of broad compromise that will satisfy everybody. Now it's 'we're doing right so come along with us' sort of thing.

JR I feel that what we've said so far is correct but I feel we've got to go still further because what the Tories are doing isn't just continuing certain aspects of previous Conservative Party philosophy or views. It's a definite radical break. Now what is this break? One aspect of it is that they are

want. We have tended to accept what's been given to us and yet I think most ordinary people are aware of the limitations of social democracy. They're quite aware of it.

When I think of the success of this Government I think of one of the lads who works with me. He's 19 years old, comes from Bermondsey in the East End, which is a decaying place with a high rate of unemployment. This lad has lived in this place all his life and he really sees a lot in the Tory government. He won't picket, he won't come out on strike and he sees a personal value, a personal integrity, in that. He has a strong anti-collectivist approach. He's a nice kid, he's a good worker and is very caring for other people but it's on his own terms. In other words, for people like him social democracy doesn't work, the values aren't there and it's clear they can see what we

severely and reinforce this.

JA Talking about the cuts, the facilities in schools are being really cut back in standard things like text books, but instead of getting any resistance to that people are actively becoming involved in charity events to provide and soften that cutback and they see that as being their kind of progressiveness. That's one kind of reaction.

The Tories are winning the minds of people that here is something that's different and the inevitability of failure of any other course but this one and that's the major thing I think they've done. The difference with Thatcherism is they've deliberately fought for the minds of people and I think that is a radical difference with what's happening and they're succeeding at the moment.

BI I'd like to ask what they are after. You know this slogan of the TUC 'Forward into the 80s not back to the 30s'. Now I don't think the Tories are thinking along the lines of back to the thirties. I think they are trying to evolve a strategy for capitalism in the eighties. Capitalism in the late seventies, let's face it, was getting deeper and deeper into the mire because of all the contradictions and what we're seeing is an attempt to push the whole of society in a rightward direction through a massive ideological campaign, backed up by the press, as well as practical measures.

What they're grappling with is a policy for capitalism in the eighties. And capitalism in the eighties won't survive, it seems to me, with the same sort of policies it had in the fifties, sixties and seventies — due to world factors and national factors. I think we have got to see it as an attempt to create the sort of society that will allow for a capitalism in the eighties.

But we have got to recognise here that we are talking about a small section of the capitalist class. This particular Cabinet strategy is geared to the big financiers and the multinationals because it seems to me that there is nobody else benefiting from it. I think there are opportunities now starting to present themselves quite clearly to win sections of traditional Tory support away from this particular Government and this particular strategy. For example, I don't have any figures on it, but I wouldn't mind putting money on it that the number of small businesses going to the wall now has accelerated at more or less the same rate as unemployment is going up.

JR On the question of Tory support . . .

BI I'd like to make a point on this. My experience is different. I think you'd expect

Jacky Atkin



mounting a concerted and consistent attack on social democracy — on the welfare state, on the whole idea of a caring society. They're mounting an attack on the whole idea of social democracy and its values. I think that's the unifying thing.

Now why has this happened? I think it might well be because the Labour Party and the Left in the past have in a sense taken social democracy for granted. In the past we've always fought, for example, for defence of child facilities, defence of the National Enterprise Board or nationalisation. We've fought on many defensive issues but we've never questioned the weaknesses of those things. For example if you take the person who consumes the social services, for example a child care service, we defend it because it's all we've got. But we never question how that service is administered. It doesn't belong to me or you, it's done for me and you. We've defended them but what we haven't done in the Party is to say what is a socialist service, what it is that we actually

haven't seen in a sense, the weaknesses in social democracy, in its values and its institutions. It is those weaknesses that the Tories attack and exploit and after that you either get a stronger collective approach, saying no this isn't good enough we want a socialist social service, socialist nationalisation or we have the other reaction which is the individualistic one, let's do things for ourselves.

JyA One thing the Tories are after is that families should be helped and encouraged to look after their own members. That is quite clear-cut. And within that, men should be the breadwinners and women should be forced to be more involved in the care of those who can't fend for themselves. This is very much against what the Left — under the impact of Women's Liberation — has stood for over the last 10 years. It's interesting that this is a big thing for the Tories. There's an ideological attack — and then there's unemployment and the cuts which affect women particularly

my experiences to be different, working in the North. There is a different situation probably. The swing to the Tories didn't happen in the North in the way it happened in the Midlands and South.

JA I base my judgement on the Midlands particularly, although I've just come back from Liverpool and I took the opportunity of having a night out with some dockers and some other working lads up there and the majority of people were unemployed. Now in spite of the tremendous hardship that they're suffering up in Liverpool, I found no great desire even to vote Labour let alone to support the Communist Party and, as a matter of fact, it quite frightened me the degree of racialism. Quite frankly, I thought they would even move to the Liberal philosophy in Liverpool rather than go back to the Labour Party. You see that's the extent to which I think we've got the problem. I don't think there's any swing away from the Tories. I think people are dissatisfied with where they are at this point in time, but I think that the major success that Thatcher's had, and I think she said it herself at the 12 month anniversary of her election, that the biggest success was the way they had changed people's attitudes. It was this conditioning of people to accept that there was no other alternative and it was a radical, possible alternative for them. And this has softened to a degree the reaction against the effects of the Tory policies.

JR I think that in the last 12 months there has been a strong tendency to react to the immediate effects of the Tory policies without, at the same time, questioning the overall Tory strategy and I think that's very important because it means on a short term basis they might lose support but on a long term basis we've got a much bigger fight on our hands.

But I wanted to deal with another question that Bill raised, namely the Tories' objectives. There were three things I wanted to mention. Firstly, I think that our working class and our working people have expected a steady increase in living standards over the last 20 to 30 years. In my union, for example, we have expected our living standards to increase rather than fall. I think the first thing the Tories want to do is to reverse that expectation. They say look if you want to continue to expect those things then you have got to work for them. You've got to work harder. You've got to pay the cost of these things. You've got to rebuild first, the jam tomorrow argument. That's their first objective, to change everybody's expectations. They are doing this with the attack on

living standards, the welfare state and so forth.

A second thing I think they are doing, and this I'm a lot less certain about, is shifting the direction in which capitalism is developing in this country. Their objective is to push Britain and British capital much more into the international division of labour camp. For example, in steel they have closed down Corby and yet they are importing massive amounts of steel. The Tories see an international division of labour where steel is produced more effectively in the Ruhr Valley and we produce other services regardless of how that affects working people, their living standards, their jobs etc.

The third thing is this. They know we are in a crisis. They know it's difficult to manage the country in this crisis. And therefore they

Bill Innes



are very concerned in making sure they can police and control what is happening. The only obstacle to these policies seems to me to be the organised working class, which is precisely why it's important for them to push through the Employment Bill to effectively tie our hands behind our backs in lots of ways, and why it's important for them to divide the communities through measures such as the Housing Bill.

PROBLEMS OF THE MOVEMENT

BI The experience of Labour governments is a question to look at. I think Labour certainly started to become the party of the country under the system as it was then rather than a party that was progressing towards socialism. The word socialism was hardly ever used by the Labour leadership. Many younger people grew up during this period. This is how they saw Labour. But there's another point. Although there were changes of government, there were never any dramatic breaks in regard to the direction of the country. There

wasn't that sort of massive ideological crunch suggesting that everybody saw Labour, the class saw Labour, as socialist. And there lies one of the problems which leads to the position we're in now where you've got that thread that I mentioned earlier on, which to a certain extent hasn't been broken, where you've still got the emphasis of capitalism's crisis being placed at the door of working class people. That's the thread that the Left's got to break and I think that we've got to draw a distinction there in regard to the crisis and whose responsibility it is.

AB I think there is a confusion in important sections of the working class about what socialism is. They would tend to regard Labour governments as being socialist and I think this is because there is a general weakness within the working class and the labour movement as a whole as to what socialism really is. It's never really been a philosophy, an ideology that's had mass support or really wide support in Great Britain.

JA I think many people identify socialism with Callaghan. And they then say if that's socialism then I accept Thatcherism. This is the problem that I still find with the people that I talk to. So I think that there is a tremendous job of work to be done and although I'm not absolutely discouraged I think it would be foolish of us not to realise the test that we've got.

AB I think the reason for the election of the Thatcher government is a longer and more deep seated problem than just what happened with the last Labour government. There is, for example, the question of the relatively low unemployment since 1940. I think this certainly helped the right wing leadership of the labour movement, the right-wing type of Labour governments that we have had, and their influence in the Labour Party and as far as ordinary people were concerned. You know the right-wing theories, the ideas of making capitalism work, utilising all the resources and all the interests of the people, seemed to be working. And if you've got a position like you had in South Wales, a contrast between the war and what happened after the war when we had full employment (and indeed not just full employment but women going out to work which made a great financial difference to the home), so the influence of the right wing was reinforced. It was always strong, even before the war, but it was reinforced after the war, certainly in areas like South Wales.

The right wing were the ideologically

dominant force in the Labour Party and in the trade unions, and this meant that what the Tories and the ruling class did in the way of ideas had a better chance of cottoning on: it was not counteracted by and large except by the Communist Party and we were virtually isolated in the fifties and early sixties and had very little effect. I know this from my own very personal experience and the kind of reaction we had from people.

The result was that you had the drip drip drip, if I can put it like that, of ideas — that the health service was feather bedding people, people were getting 40 pairs of spectacles, it was easy to get a doctor's note. This is the type of argument that we got in the fifties and it went on from there.

I don't think it was because the ruling class had a cohesive, all-embracing philosophy and strategy, culminating in 1979 and the Thatcher government. It was just that they instinctively felt that nationalisation, the health service were a potential threat sometime in the future if the capitalist system ever got into a crisis. And so I think this combined with the fact that there was no propaganda for socialism and the ideas and morality of socialism meant they were able to undermine what were potentially powerful institutions which we could really build on as a practical means of explaining what socialism was about.

Let me make this point in another way. When I joined the Communist Party in 1948 I was having arguments about the owners of factories and the people who had money having the right to have it. I was still having those arguments in 1979. But whereas I could win allies on such questions as loungers and scroungers on the dole, I was virtually isolated on that kind of point. There was no discussion and argument on this basic assumption that capitalism is the system we're under and it hasn't altered in those 30 to 40 years. We have got to somehow change that.

JA I wouldn't accept that we stumbled into Thatcherism. I think it's much more strategic than that. I accept that that is the process that we've gone through but I don't think we've just stumbled by accident into the kind of things that Thatcher's doing.

BI I think that's right. What we were talking about earlier on in the discussion was what attracted mass support for the Tories. We discussed the radical policies they've put forward and capturing people's imagination. What they were saying to people is that there is a way out but it is going to take tremendous sacrifices. Now here we're also talking about the problems that we face in the labour

movement, the problems that we face as a Left, in the Communist Party. To a certain extent we're facing similar problems, that's how we start to get our approach over to masses of people.

I joined the Communist Party because it gave me a vision, an objective, and I think most people have eventually joined the Communist Party not for the alternative economic strategy but for what the alternative economic strategy has got at the other end of it. But this raises one of the key issues we face as a labour movement. What's the ideology of the labour movement? Is it pro-socialist? I don't think we could argue it is. You get various people who hold positions of leadership in the British labour movement who may argue to one degree or another that they are socialist or pro-socialist. But the

Alan Baker



ideology of our class I think is not really pro-socialist or progressive. And that's really the key to breaking out of this sort of ghetto that we've got ourselves into.

I think the whole question of vision is very important. You can win people now on import controls, you can probably go into any factory in the country and get Tories to agree with you on import controls. Now that's important — because it's a very important aspect of our strategy. But I think we would all agree that import controls left on their own are no solution to the problems that we face as a country. As part of an overall strategy they're very important, but leaving it at that and saying we will have a six month price freeze as well is inadequate. How is this going to look when our gaffers say if you're going to freeze the prices of the stuff we're making, we're not going to make it here any more. So really we can't get away with just trying to itemise one or two things and popularising them. We've got to popularise the vision and what is possible given the resources that this

country has got.

This is the thing we have got to do given this great weakness it seems to me of the British working class where, on the one hand we've got the best organised, the most powerful trade union movement but on the other hand, the politics of the class that the trade union movement organises is very weak indeed. And this of course is the *role* of the Communist Party.

THE FIGHTBACK

JR One of the problems here, Bill, I think are the divisions within the working class. My experience of the fightback campaign on the cuts in Lambeth so far has been that it's been extremely difficult to get different sections of the working people actually pulling in the same direction. One obvious problem is that the Communist Party, the Labour Left and labour movement as a whole are basically concentrated at the point of production. There is this division between the workplace and the non-workplace. In practice we have major difficulties in overcoming sectional consciousness within the movement and one of the main divisions is that one. I think that most people do take off their militant coats and leave them in the office or the factory when they go home.

JA I would like to say something about Leyland's here. And this is why I say the Tory tactics aren't an accident. They beat us at Longbridge — and I consider that the worst defeat in my experience in the trade union movement — on a very strategic basis. They started off with a conditioning process and the propaganda was absolutely tremendous. The first reaction was one of amazement that they sacked the convenor. There was an immediate response from the work force, but not the kind of response that I would have liked, not a 100% response. There are lots of divisions in the plant between the unions, with the major one at the moment between the AUEW and the T&G, which reflects itself in the craft versus production worker angle that we haven't been able to reconcile.

Part of the Tory strategy is a deliberate attack on the trade unions to prevent any fightback. Nationalised industries are a particular target, facilitated by the disenchantment people have with the nationalised industries. Leyland was a very easy target. I mean you look at the advantages the company had. You've got a bankrupt company, it's been bankrupt since 1974 and dependent on public investment cash, with little real appreciation of this as a matter of fact amongst the workforce. So you have a

weak company with a very strong management.

They strategically divided the company. They organised the ballot to accept 25,000 redundancies and they sacked Derek. They would have sacked me without any doubt if I hadn't have had more broadly based support. The reason I say more broadly based support — that is within the T&G and production worker groups — is that again you had the seeds of division sown with the craft workers' dispute within Leyland when Derek took a very principled line that here is a section acting against the overall good of the total work force. Derek took a very principled line then that alienated him from the people that he directly represented, the 2,000 or so tool makers. It was tailor-made for the attack and when they took Derek out they calculated all the odds. With the 25,000 redundancies it depended on united resistance in every plant in Leyland and what they did was isolate a dozen plants and get the majority of people to take a very selfish point of view.

It was a quite deliberate attempt to weaken, to smash the trade unions in a major company that had seen several working class initiatives, with resistance not only to company onslaughts but also on a wider political basis. It was quite strategic and Derek was very very vulnerable, probably the most powerful convenor in the country and probably the most vulnerable. The amount of propaganda that went into the sacking was incredible. We had a very good communications system with the members. We can knock off a couple of leaflets a day. We can hold meetings within the departments and that was being done beforehand, but the company suddenly started reprinting editorials out of national newspapers and so on. They were coming out on the hour backed up by massive direct propaganda. They massed in the supervisory force. Our relationships with ASTMS in our plant are probably better than almost anywhere, but at this point they suddenly saw, for some reason, that the company was right and they couldn't identify it as being an attack upon the trade unions. It was seen as an individual thing, get rid of Derek Robinson and all will be well.

A climate of intimidation was created and even some very good shop stewards felt personally intimidated by the attacks and they kept their heads down, which assisted the management with the onslaught. Senior management made direct contact with the lads on the shop floor, explaining to them the company's position in a way that we failed to respond to. So for all these reasons they got away with it.

A major problem was that all efforts in the

plant seemed to centre around making the dispute official. That was the turning point. And it exposes our weaknesses anyway because when we're in that kind of fight whether it is official or not doesn't matter a damn, it's that critical and important. And when the AUEW obviously weren't going to make the dispute official and Duffy ordered the workers back to work and if necessary to cross the picket lines that really was the end of the road.

It wasn't a question of a pamphlet, it was part of an overall strategy and unfortunately we failed to match their efforts. But having said that I think the criticism that's levelled at us ought to be metered by looking at what they've got going for them, the tremendous forces they've got available to them, unlimited cash, unlimited propaganda, the local media working non-stop for them.

I don't know what the lessons are because I happen to think that on specific issues like that they always have been and always will in the future be capable of mounting that kind of campaign and getting away with it until we get, as Derek says, another 6 or 700 people reading the *Star* every day — in other words a different political situation in the works.

AB I think the Tories are doing two things. They are conducting a massive blitzkrieg type of policy in order to frighten people, which they've been fairly successful at doing. We've got a factory down in Caerphilly which has accepted a cut in wages to try and save the factory. That's a sign of the times. Secondly, they've honed to perfection this idea of attacking one section at a time in order to do what they want to on one front and then go onto somewhere else. They did it in Leyland's and they've done it in the steel works in terms of shutting down plant after plant. So they're using both fear and isolation. And they're helped by underlying ideas of constitutionalism, that this is an elected government and therefore you can't do anything until we have a General Election in five years time. I think we would be mistaken if we didn't realise that this is a factor in the situation.

Now on steel. The basic details I think are well known. There was this continual rundown in plant after plant. Then, in South Wales, we were confronted with this question of either the two plants would go or the one plant would go or they would both be slimmed down. The strike on wages I think helped the struggle against closures because there was a militancy which the steel workers had never experienced before. And there did emerge a certain sort of movement in the South Wales steel workers union, particularly in the blast furnacemen in Port Talbot

and to a certain extent in the ISTSC, to develop a struggle against the closures as well. Combined with this of course there was the support that the miners gave in South Wales.

In the first instance, we were trying to get the Wales TUC to take the initiative and call out all the South Wales unions, even just on a one day basis. This they failed to do and gradually it became clear that the Wales TUC wasn't going to do anything like this. More and more miners felt that we would have to come into the struggle alongside the steel workers so we had the position where we went to the miners in February and asked for support for all out action on February 25 in support of the steel workers — not on the wages question but on opposition to the plants closure.

Well you know what the result of that was. It was a massive defeat for the South Wales Miners' Executive. I think the problem that was really in the minds of the miners was that they could be left holding the baby if the steel workers went back, and there was some justification for this. But above all, I think they felt that they would be entering into a political struggle to change the policy of the Government. Now the South Wales miners, fighting on their own, couldn't see what I think the South Wales Executive and what the Communist Party in South Wales was after, that this could be the spark that would start the prairie fire — to involve other unions in South Wales, certainly the National Union of Mineworkers, and then eventually other areas of Britain, but particularly the communities of South Wales.

Now I can tell you that we are facing a catastrophic situation in South Wales. I don't know whether it's coming through to the rest of Britain but if they succeed in shutting down those steel works, as they look all set to do, plus most of the South Wales coalfields if not all, then we are talking of almost total devastation in relation to the South Wales industrial scene. There will be mass unemployment on a scale that will make the thirties pale into insignificance. It's not the same as the thirties because then there was hope, there were hundreds of pits still working 2, 3 or 4 days a week. There were little steel works and fairly large ones dotted up and down the valleys. Now we are talking about the total closure of industries in South Wales.

There is the potential of a resistance and fightback. I can tell you now there is a feeling among South Wales miners that they made a mistake when they didn't come out for the steel workers in February. There is now a certain reaction. They can see the consequences of it all. But I wouldn't like to state

categorically that we are going to come out if they finally decide to shut pits. We've got all sorts of problems and battles of ideas linked up with what I said about coming out and fighting the Government.

It's fairly easy to get a decision on a struggle on a specific concrete case. On the question of Deep Duffryn we had a massive campaign and we even got the National Union of Mineworkers to take a decision that it would strike if the South Wales area called for assistance on this question. And we forced the NCB and the Government to retreat on this particular pit.

But we could be in danger of winning battles and losing wars on this issue and this is the problem as I see it. We need to get the South Wales miners to take a decisive stand against the whole concept of the rundown of the coal mining industry, not just on one pit or even a group of pits, and in the process involve the South Wales communities and through them hopefully have a political influence on the rest of Britain. Maybe we can then begin to halt the Tory steamroller. If we can disrupt this, throw the spanner in the works and slow it down, then we may have a chance of regrouping the forces of the labour movement and begin to make some changes in the Government's policy. Otherwise I think we are in for a real hiding.

That's the position we're in in South Wales at the moment. It rests very much as I see it on where the miners will go in relation to the pits closures they are planning. We've got a decision from the pits at the moment that they will support the South Wales area in any future action that they decide to take and hopefully this will be backed up on a national level. But it's a real problem because if the steel workers sold their jobs the miners gave theirs away in the sixties and it's not a very easy position we're in. But there is the possibility in South Wales of a very wide struggle involving the miners and the communities because for both it's a life and death issue.

We need to create a position where the potential weakness of the Government could be revealed. I still do not think this Government is acting on the basis of strength and power. But if they get away with it, they will certainly be in a position where they will be strong and powerful. I've got no doubts about that. But at this stage it seems to me they can be stopped and we can begin to regroup and make some fightback.

JyA I think it's really difficult this discussion because we all come from such different areas and I have found it really hard this last two hours. But I think it's good talking and listening to each other. Perhaps I

could just say that I think feminism does relate to all these questions. It's not a separate compartment. It affects the whole nature of the cuts campaign, it even affects the struggle in Leyland. In other words the women's movement is not just another social force.

Women have made a lot of gains over the last 10 years: there have been big legislative advances like the Equal Pay Act and big changes at an attitudes level. Now the Tory government is trying to reverse those limited gains, driving women back into the home, isolating them, with the cuts in health, welfare, transport and so on. There's now a big move being made to show how that actually affects women's lives. This is what the cuts group in Birmingham are trying to do. But then there is the need to get it across — in the local community, to trade union branches and so on.

Jack Adams



There's much more optimism in the women's movement about actually fighting the Government: a lot of people seem to be quite immobilised by what's happening. In one sense this has touched part of the women's liberation movement, because an element have become entrenched about men and the Left. I don't feel it's true of the women's movement more widely, not in Birmingham anyway.

JR The point Alan raised about the way in which the pit struggles were taken into the community and visa versa is very important. I really think that the cuts fightback campaigns I've been involved in in London have been very sectionalised. It's been much more difficult to do this.

JA Yes I think there is real potential in Wales because of this community feeling that's there.

BI I think one of the most important

questions that faces the Party and the labour movement now is the fight around the question of closures and unemployment. We are faced with an immediate and growing problem with what must be 2 million people actually out of work and closures all over the place every week. One of the real dilemmas that we as a Party, and the Left as a whole, faces is just how we grapple with that situation.

involved in the struggle on this question? Certainly in my experience it's extremely difficult to get somebody that's actually on the dole interested in some sort of campaign unless they're already a political activist or leaning in that direction. I think the question that we've to start asking ourselves is what about the possibilities of organisation amongst the unemployed. This would help to bring them into the struggle alongside the trade unions and help to maintain the links between the unemployed and the unions. It's my experience that when you lose people in engineering through redundancies and they become long term unemployed, they also lose their links with the labour movement which is again another threat. Above all, it is a problem with youth unemployment which is bringing up a whole new generation of people who have no links at all and have never had any with the movement. It seems to me that we continue as we are now on the question of unemployment at our peril.

JA Well it's almost impossible really but I think you've got to stop the closures. I think that's the answer — otherwise people start accepting it. I don't think that they're completely out of control with unemployment. But we will go above the 2 million mark in real terms and it won't come down. It will stick there and that's because the efforts are on productivity and labour-saving. They're using the situation now to do that. And the jobs will be gone forever. You'll have this permanent pool of unemployed labour that you won't budge. And people'll accept it unless we really fight against it now and stop it. Now I think that once people get out of their ability to organise they get very isolated — exactly with Jacky's point about women — large numbers of people very isolated. That's very very difficult. I think it's got to be stopped. There has got to be some kind of campaign we develop that rejects the idea of closures and redundancies and that there's nothing we can do about it. Unless that's done, I think we're in real trouble and that's what we ought to concentrate on. This is a really big question for the movement. □

Note:

The transcript was typed by Eda Ciccone.

Sheila Smith

A New International Economic Order - or Disorder?

THE BACKGROUND

For less developed countries (LDCs), the postwar period has seen massive political and economic transformations. After 1947 when India gained independence, successful struggles against colonial rule occurred throughout the Third World. This was reflected in UN membership which grew from 55 in 1946 to 152 in 1979, with the South outnumbering both West and East. Political independence in LDCs was followed by attempts to create economic independence, with development plans, industrialisation programmes, efforts to build up an infrastructure of transport, power, education, health, etc.

These attempts have had some successes, but it is increasingly obvious that political independence has not automatically generated economic independence, for two reasons: first, the end of formal colonial rule has not meant the end of imperialism; most LDCs are characterised by forms of imperialist domination which are indirect, but pervasive. Secondly, world capitalist trade and financial institutions are organised by rules determined by the advanced capitalist countries. Since it is not possible for most LDCs to isolate themselves from the world economy, the conflict between the conditions necessary for self-reliant development and the actual conditions prevailing in the international capitalist economy have become increasingly apparent.

This conflict has intensified in the 1970s with the end of the postwar 'long boom' in the capitalist world, and as a result of the responses of the advanced capitalist countries to the ensuing instability and recession. The recession facing the advanced capitalist countries has created a new context for the evolution of relations between advanced capitalist countries, socialist countries and the LDCs, in which various outcomes are possible. One danger would be a parallel with the 1930s, which saw the breaking up of the world into various trading blocs.

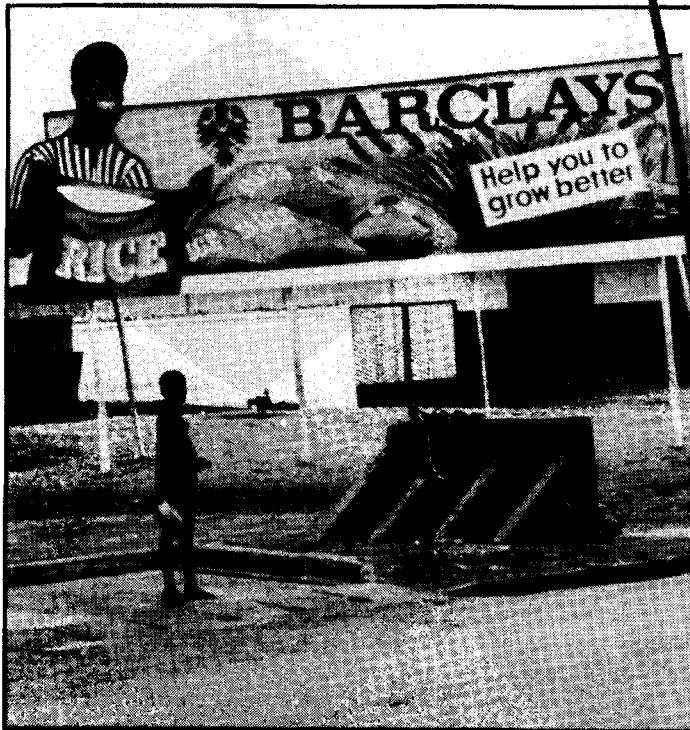
The call for a New International Economic Order

A further consequence of political independence has been attempts at collective organisation by LDCs themselves, starting with the Non-Aligned Movement and regional organisations such as the Organisation of American States and the Organisation of African Unity. This was also reflected in growing militancy in the UN, and the

establishment by the UN of the Conference on Trade and Development as a counterweight to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, dominated by the advanced capitalist countries. In all such bodies, growing dissatisfaction was voiced with the major economic institutions of the capitalist world, with the activities of multinationals, and with the discriminatory nature of trade and commercial policies of the advanced capitalist countries. These developments culminated in the adoption by the UN General Assembly on May Day 1974, of a resolution calling for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). The call for a NIEO at that time was partly a result of the successful action by the oil producers in unilaterally raising oil prices, since this demonstrated the potential strength of commodity producers' collective action. Negotiations on the NIEO occurred during the 1970s, in UNCTAD and in the North-South Conference, but by the late 1970s discussions had reached a deadlock, for two reasons. First, the responses of advanced capitalist countries conditioned by the economic instability and recession, became decreasingly conducive to the demands of the NIEO. Secondly, political and economic tensions among LDCs surfaced when attempts were made to translate anti-imperialist rhetoric into practical action.

In an attempt to break the deadlock in NIEO negotiations, the UN set up the Commission on International Development, chaired by Willy Brandt and including influential western politicians such as Edward Heath and Olaf Palme, but with a majority of LDC members. The Brandt Report, presented to the UN in February 1980, offers an alternative strategy for breaking out of the recession and for laying the basis for an NIEO, involving an 'international Keynesian' approach combined with massive resource transfers to poor countries. The effects of these proposals will depend largely on the collective response of governments in advanced capitalist countries, which in turn will depend on the strength with which progressive movements in the advanced capitalist countries are prepared to fight for them.

For socialists in the advanced capitalist countries, the NIEO raises many important questions: how will a redistribution of resources towards LDCs affect the standards of living in advanced capitalist countries? If such a redistribution occurs, will it simply reinforce repressive and reactionary regimes in LDCs? Is any progress towards



a NIEO possible within the context of international capitalist relations?

THE NIEO: WHAT ARE THE NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT?

The main economic issues included under the umbrella of the NIEO are:

- (i) international trade relations, including problems of primary commodity trade, and problems of access to markets for LDC exports.
- (ii) international monetary institutions — including greater participation by LDCs in the management of agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, and reforms in the operation of the IMF.
- (iii) aid and other resource transfers, including the level of indebtedness of LDCs and the issue of debt relief.
- (iv) control over the activities of multinationals — including technological transfer, patent rights and restrictive practices.

Also included are issues such as the preservation of the environment, seabed exploration and exploitation, and international migration, but these issues will not be discussed here.

Table 1

Destination of exports, 1960 & 1977, as percentage of total exports

From		Low Income LDC's*	Middle Income LDC's	Advanced Capitalist Countries
To				
Developed	'60	63	71	67
Capitalist Countries	'77	66	67	67
Less Developed	'60	30	24	30
Countries	'77	24	28	26
Socialist Countries	'60	7	5	3
	'77	8	4	4
Oil Exporters†	'60	—	—	—
	'77	2	1	3

*Countries with per capita income of \$300 and below in 1977.

†Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait.

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report*, 1979, pp146-7.

(i) International Trade Relations

The structure of world trade still reflects the legacy of colonialism in which LDCs became primary producers for the imperialist countries. Table 1 indicates the pattern of trade: around two-thirds of LDC exports are to advanced capitalist countries and around one-quarter are to other LDCs; for advanced capitalist countries two-thirds of exports are to other advanced capitalist countries. Likewise the majority of exports by socialist countries are to other socialist countries, and only a small proportion of LDC exports are to socialist countries.

In the postwar period, with independence from colonial rule, two important changes have occurred. One is the growing awareness among LDCs of the problems of dependence on primary production and export, and a demand for action to alleviate these problems. The other is industrialisation in LDCs, and the expansion of LDCs' capacity to produce manufactured goods for export, thus challenging the colonial trade pattern. LDC manufactured exports have increasingly been confronted by trade barriers restricting their access

**most primary commodities are exported
raw and processed in advanced
capitalist countries. Frequently they are
re-imported**

to advanced capitalist countries' markets, at a time when advanced capitalist countries themselves are reducing trade barriers against each other, eg in the EEC. Both aspects have been exacerbated in the 1970s by the instability in world markets, and by the recession which has reduced demand for primary commodities and intensified the discriminatory protection against LDC manufactured exports.

The NIEO negotiations have been concerned both with means of alleviating the problems of dependence on primary exports, and with the trade policies of the advanced capitalist countries.

Structural problems

The problem of dependence on primary production is that a large proportion of LDCs are dependent for most of their foreign exchange earnings on one or a small number of primary commodities, for example Ghana derives more than two-thirds of foreign exchange earnings from cocoa, Zambia more than 90 per cent from copper. Structural problems arise for the following reasons:

(a) Most LDCs have extremely small domestic markets for their own major export commodities, thus they are highly vulnerable to changes in international demand conditions, with little domestic consumption to act as a cushion. Since most LDCs export the majority of their commodities to advanced capitalist countries, they are vulnerable to the cycle of boom and recession there. Demand for primary products is also influenced by the search for substitutes (eg, for cotton and rubber), and by the protection by advanced capitalist countries of their own primary production (eg, EEC protection of beet sugar production, and dumping of subsidised sugar on the world market). Market conditions are also influenced by the operation of huge multinationals able to exert considerable market power (eg, Typhoo, Cadbury's, Unilever, United Fruit Company), and because the growth of demand for such commodities is often slow, since they are not the types of commodities for which demand rises rapidly as income rises.

(b) Primary agricultural producers are also vulnerable because of unplanned fluctuations in output, since production is affected by weather conditions, disease, etc. This is largely because technology is, in many cases, relatively backward, thus natural conditions exert a powerful influence on the level of output.

The combination of major shifts in demand, because of boom and

recession in the major consuming countries, with unplanned fluctuations in output, and the operations of speculators and large multinationals, means that prices of primary commodities are highly unstable. This is illustrated for a few commodities in Table 2. Short-run price instability means instability of incomes, tax revenues and of the general level of economic activity in primary producing LDCs. A further problem is the possibility that primary commodity prices tend to fall relative to manufactured goods prices in the long run, thus leading to a fall in the import purchasing power of LDC exports.

Possible solutions

There are various ways of alleviating these problems. Price instability can be overcome either by long-term trade agreements at stable prices, thus replacing the market determination of prices, or by forms of market intervention which limit the degree of price instability. The likelihood of long-term trade agreements in the near future is limited, since the major consuming countries are the advanced capitalist countries, where political support for planned trade is not exactly overpowering. Political differences among LDCs also have the effect of weakening support for measures which replace markets by planning. Thus NIEO negotiations have concentrated on mechanisms to reduce price instability, principally on the establishment of buffer stocks with agreed floor and ceiling prices: the buffer stock operates by purchasing the commodity when the price reaches the floor, and selling when the price reaches the ceiling, reducing in this way the range of price fluctuations. In the longer run, there are various possibilities: indexing the prices of primary commodities to the prices of manufactures; diversification programmes to reduce dependence on so few commodities; and industrialisation to raise the level of processing of the commodities within the LDCs themselves (since most primary commodities are exported raw and processed in the advanced capitalist countries. Frequently they are re-imported, in smaller quantities, by LDCs.)

One aim in the NIEO negotiations has been to establish a Common Fund to finance stabilisation and diversification programmes for 18 commodities. Stabilisation programmes would cover 10 commodities: coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, cotton, jute, sisal, rubber, copper and tin. Initially, the LDCs argued that a Common Fund would need \$2,000m to be effective. The advanced capitalist countries succeeded in watering this down to \$750m, of which \$400m would be for stabilisation schemes (the 'first window') and \$350m for diversification and other measures in non-storable commodities (the 'second window'). Agreement was reached in 1979 for subscriptions to the first window, but only \$70m was pledged for the second. The more difficult task, however, is the negotiation of the individual commodity agreements, most of which have already run into the sand, either because of the refusal of the developed capitalist countries to participate in any agreement to their short- or long-term disadvantage, or because of failure to reach the necessary degree of cooperation among LDCs beyond the level of rhetoric. So, for example, the sugar pact has been emasculated by the US Congress' refusal to ratify it and the EEC's refusal to join it; Ecuador and other Central American banana producers have refused to join a banana agreement; Morocco (the world's major phosphates producer) has refused to attend meetings on a phosphates agreement; East African tea producers are unwilling to limit the growth of their output of tea, which is growing at the expense of the less efficient Asian producers; and negotiations on a cocoa agreement broke down because of the refusal of the advanced capitalist countries to agree to the price range required by the producers.

So not only is the total fund for financing commodity programmes inadequate, and not only have the advanced capitalist countries succeeded in limiting the activities of the Common Fund to the

financing of individual commodity agreements (rather than more systematic intervention in commodity markets as a whole), but the individual commodity agreements are stymied both by opposition from advanced capitalist countries and divisions among LDCs. This means that more ambitious schemes such as the indexation of primary commodity prices to manufactured goods' prices are even more likely to end on the scrap heap.

The rules of the game

The second aspect of international trade relations is related to the way in which the 'rules of the game' are determined, especially the trade policies of the advanced capitalist countries towards manufactured exports from LDCs. A fundamental aspect of the NIEO as far as LDCs are concerned, is the acceleration of industrial growth, involving a major shift in the international division of labour and an ending of the economic role of LDCs as the 'primary producing sector' of the industrial capitalist economies. It was in this context that the UN Industrial Development Organisation passed the Lima Declaration in 1975, that by the year 2000, the share of LDCs in world manufacturing production should rise to at least 25% (from 7% in 1973). Industrialisation is seen by the South as the only way of raising productivity and hence standards of living, generating self-reliance and reducing technological dependence on the North.¹

The implications of this for the pattern of international trade are far-reaching: in 1972, advanced capitalist countries accounted for 84.5% of world manufactured exports, socialist countries for 10% and LDCs for 5.5%, and this pattern is likely to change drastically in the

Table 2

Selected primary commodities, percentage price change

	1950-60	1960-70	1970-73
Sugar	-27	+19	+99
Tin	+6	+68	-49
Coffee	-24	+46	+30
Rubber	+1	-49	+92
Jute	+32	-7	-2
Tea	0	-20	-6
Manufactures	+22	+19	+40

Source: A J Yeats, *Trade Barriers Facing Developing Countries*, Macmillan, 1979, p28; and S Harris & T Josling, 'Can World Commodity Prices be Explained?' *National Westminster Bank Quarterly Review*, August 1974, p30.

Table 3

Export of manufactures from newly industrialising countries

Percentage rate of growth per year, 1965-74

South Korea 39	Brazil 27	Malaysia 18
Thailand 37	Mexico 25	
Taiwan 34	Argentina 23	

Table 4

Rates of increase of industrial production

Percentage, per annum

	1963-70	1970-73	1973-76
South Korea	19.3	20.7	26.6
Taiwan	17.7	21.4	9.2
Singapore	13.2	18.2	3.9
Brazil	7.3	13.7	7.2
Mexico	8.9	7.4	4.6
Advanced Capitalist Countries (average)	5.9	6.0	0.8

Source (tables 3 & 4): NIC's and the Adjustment Problem, Working Paper, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Jan 1979.

future. Already there are some LDCs — the newly industrialised countries, eg, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Taiwan — which are expanding their capacity to produce and export manufactures at a phenomenal rate, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. The response to this change in the capacity of some LDCs to export manufactures has been a growth of protection in the advanced capitalist countries directed specifically against LDCs, and it is precisely this closing of access to markets for manufactures which is a major issue in the NIEO. It is also an issue on which little progress has been made, and on which the prospects for future progress are extremely bleak, since protection by advanced capitalist countries against LDC manufactured exports has intensified significantly during the recession.

The alternative strategy and LDCs

The issue of the changing international division of labour is a complex one for the Left in Britain. Import controls and the planning of trade are important features of most versions of the alternative economic strategy, and it is necessary to consider how this strategy can be made consistent with the demands of the NIEO. Industrialisation in LDCs is clearly the major means by which living standards in LDCs will rise, and by which LDCs' economies can become more self-reliant, and the trade component of the alternative economic strategy cannot be based upon an international division of labour which was forged during the era of colonialism. Furthermore industrialisation in LDCs will involve increased export prospects overall, even if the prospects for our exports of certain types of manufactures are reduced. On the other hand the alternative economic strategy clearly involves a reduction in the extent to which British industry can be undermined by competition from abroad. It is particularly vital that the demand for import controls is linked to a planned restructuring of British industry which takes account of changes in the international division of labour which are both inevitable and progressive. This will increasingly involve the negotiation of long-term trade agreements in which we import raw materials and consumer goods from LDCs in exchange for our exports of intermediate and capital goods.

There are certain arguments against this view which need to be considered. First, some part of the manufacturing output and exports from LDCs represents the relocation of production by multinational companies, undermining strong labour movements in the advanced capitalist countries by exploiting low-wage, unorganised labour in LDCs; secondly, even where multinationals are not involved, manufacturing production has grown most rapidly in LDCs characterised by extremely reactionary and repressive regimes which attempt to stamp out effective trade union activities. Thirdly, the industries affected by competition from LDCs exports are frequently in areas where unemployment is already high, and currently there is no effective mechanism in Britain for transferring unemployed workers into other industrial activities: closure of factories is not generally associated with the opening of new factories nor with adequate retraining facilities.

These arguments do not constitute a case for discriminating against LDCs' manufactured exports and attempting to maintain a colonial pattern of trade. First, the greatest threat to UK manufacturing industries comes from other advanced capitalist countries, not from LDCs. In a recent study by the International Labour Organisation², it is argued that the role played by LDC exports in accelerating Britain's industrial decline is much exaggerated: eg, in the textile industry, where 166,000 jobs were lost in Britain between 1970 and 1975, three main causes were identified — improved technology, decreases in demand (eg, for woollens) and the growth of imports from other advanced capitalist countries (particularly synthetics). In 1966, 61% of Britain's textile imports came from other advanced capitalist countries, and 33% from LDCs. By 1975 the proportions were 81%



and 18% respectively. Yet the growth of protectionism in this area (especially by Britain) has been directed mainly against LDCs. Secondly, to the extent that competition from LDCs is based on the super-exploitation of markets in countries where trade union activity is repressed, it will be possible by means of long-term trade agreements to take account of a resolution of the World Employment Conference in 1976, which stated that 'the competitiveness of new imports from developing countries should not be achieved to the detriment of fair labour standards'. Finally, by linking the demand for import controls to the planned revitalisation of the economy, it will if necessary be possible to transfer resources from industries in which some degree of LDC competition is accepted into other areas of industrial activity.

(ii) International Monetary Institutions

The international monetary system set up at Bretton Woods in 1944 by the advanced capitalist countries involved the establishment of two major institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the former to provide short-term loans for countries with balance of payments deficits and the latter to provide long-term development loans. The organisation of trade in the capitalist world was based on fixed exchange rates, and on the strength of the dollar as a reserve currency. The major institutions were dominated by the advanced capitalist countries: voting power in the IMF and World Bank is based on the size of countries' financial contributions, in turn related to the volume of world trade. The US has 23% of the votes in the IMF, and since major decisions require an 80% majority, the US has an effective veto. Up to the early 1970s capitalist world trade expanded rapidly, with the necessary growth in liquidity supplied by the US balance of payments deficits: in General de Gaulle's words, the US had 'the exorbitant privilege' of continuing to finance its deficits through the provision of still more dollars³. Thus the stability of the system was gradually undermined, because of the contradiction between the role of the dollar as a reserve currency and the decreasing confidence in the ability of the US to honour its obligation to convert dollars into gold.

In 1971 the system began to crumble when the dollar was divorced from gold; by 1973 the attempt to retain fixed exchange rates collapsed as major currencies were floated. The inadequacy of the

¹ For more details see Ajit Singh, 'Basic needs vs the NIEO: the Significance of Third World Industrialisation', *World Development*, Vol 7, 1979.

² Prepared by the Overseas Development Institute. See *The Guardian*, May 19 1980, p16.

³ The Brandt Report, *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, Report of the Independent Commission on International Development, Pan Books, 1980, p204.

monetary system was further demonstrated by the effects of the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973-74: it was necessary to find a means of recycling the huge OPEC surpluses and lending them to deficit countries. This task was carried out mainly by private banks, with the IMF playing only a minor role. There is no sign of any major changes in the functioning of the IMF, yet it is widely predicted that private banks will be unable to repeat the recycling operation in the wake of the 125% increase in oil prices in 1979-80, since the banks are wary of the possibility of a major default.

The international monetary system is now clearly unable to regulate trade and financing in relation to advanced capitalist countries, but its inadequacy is even greater from the viewpoint of LDCs, hence world monetary reform has been a major item on the NIEO agenda. In the NIEO negotiations three major issues have been discussed: first the undemocratic nature of the major financial institutions; secondly the inadequacy of the volume of finance available; and thirdly the rigidity of the conditions on which finance is available. The power of the IMF in relation to LDCs is enormous, since many LDCs suffer chronic balance of payments deficits. The terms of IMF loans are rigid and invariably involve deflation, devaluation, cuts in public expenditure, increased taxes and increased interest rates. Since the causes of balance of payments deficits are generally due to the economic structures of LDCs rather than to profligacy or incompetence, this policy package inevitably worsens the long-run economic situation in LDCs even if it succeeds in generating equilibrium in the balance of payments in the short-run. The dilemma faced by LDCs was sharply illustrated by the recent refusal of the Manley government in Jamaica to accept the terms of an IMF loan; but without an alternative, more benevolent institution, where can such a government borrow? In the absence of benevolence, the result will either be to force the adoption of IMF-style policies, or to enable a right wing government to take over on the grounds of the Left's economic incompetence. A retreat into isolationism is not an option for most LDCs. It is also unrealistic to expect the socialist countries to provide an alternative, since the volume of funds necessary is enormous.

No progress has been made in this area: the western capitalist countries have already vetoed a UN proposal for a new institution to give short-term loans mid-way between the IMF and the World Bank; and there is no sign of the IMF reforming itself from within. This clearly raises important issues for the Left in Britain, since the nature of international financial institutions will affect the freedom of manoeuvre of a left wing government to pursue a policy along the lines of the alternative economic strategy. The demand in the NIEO for a more democratic and more flexible institution (a benevolent IMF) is a further example of the consistency between the NIEO proposals and the alternative strategy. How to democratise existing multinational institutions is a difficult issue, but that is not a reason to ignore it.

(iii) Aid and indebtedness

During the 1970s LDC indebtedness has grown to massive dimensions. In 1970 LDCs' total debt amounted to \$74bn, by 1979 this has risen to \$274bn. More than one-quarter of these debts are held by private banks, involving crippling debt-servicing burdens, some examples of which are shown in Table 5. The West has already rejected UN proposals for a debt commission to examine LDCs' debts

Table 5

Debt service as a percentage of export earnings, 1979, selected countries

India 10.5	Zambia 18.6	Algeria 15.5
Guinea 43.5	Nicaragua 13.6	Jamaica 14.9
Egypt 22.8	Peru 30.3	Mexico 48.1

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report*, 1979.

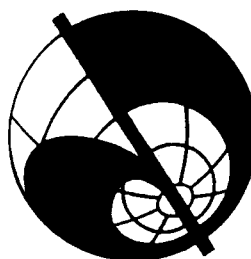
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in the context of the debtor's economic prospects, and failed to acknowledge that debts are common to a group of countries rather than piecemeal isolated cases. The level of indebtedness of LDCs is bound to increase, both because of the recession in the capitalist countries reducing export prospects and because of the 1979 doubling of oil prices. Without adequate mechanisms for financing these debts there is a genuine danger that the world financial system will collapse, as pointed out recently in the Report of the Brandt Commission.⁴ There is little evidence of the advanced capitalist countries heeding the many warnings on this issue, let alone taking any action.

Since all industrialised countries, capitalist and socialist, are tight-fisted in giving aid, it is inevitable that the small volume of aid flows is an issue raised by the NIEO. In 1978, advanced capitalist countries gave an average of 0.35% of their Gross National Product in aid, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe 0.04%. The OPEC countries are considerably more generous than advanced capitalist countries with respect to aid-giving: in 1978 OPEC aid reached \$6,700m, almost half the amount given by the advanced capitalist countries, and amounting to 2% of OPEC's GNP. But OPEC aid is also directed to some extent towards political allies. Furthermore the issue of OPEC's role in the NIEO is a complex one, on which more will be said later. In 1974, official aid given by advanced capitalist countries totalled \$11,300 million; this can be compared with the figure of \$12,462 million which LDCs paid in 1974 to advanced capitalist countries in interest on loans and repayment of principal, and with the \$13,000 million extra which oil-importing LDCs paid in 1974 because of higher oil prices. The inadequate amount of aid is not the only issue, however, since there are also questions of the form in which aid is available, the mechanisms of repayment, and the leverage which aid-giving provides to the donor country, involving political and economic influence over the recipient.

How should the Left in Britain respond to these arguments? It is clear that much aid has little to do with development, or with raising the living standards of the mass of people in LDCs, and often has more to do with serving the foreign policy aims of the donor. The latter is illustrated by a recent statement by the minister responsible for aid in the Thatcher government: 'I don't think there is anything incompatible in using aid to further foreign policy. Our foreign policy is a very good one and it is in the interests of the peace of the world.'⁵ These are not arguments for ignoring support for a progressive aid policy, in which, for example, there should be a massive increase in aid to Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, and other countries which have governments with popular democratic support.

The failure of the Left in Britain to take action on these issues can be illustrated by the fact that the first official trade union move to call the TUC International Department to account was made in May of this year by the CPSA.⁶ The motion, put to the CPSA Annual Conference, demanded an end to the arrangement whereby TUC international staff are seconded to the Foreign Office, and an end to the collaboration by the TUC with the CBI in overseas aid programmes. This has been the first trade union response to the argument advanced in a recent War on Want publication that the overseas work of trade unions in the West has been geared to the

demands of US foreign policy. If trade unions are collaborating in this way it is hardly surprising that aid programmes support reactionary rather than progressive regimes.

(iv) Control over the activities of multinationals

The activities of multinationals present problems for all progressive movements and governments, because of their sheer size, flexibility, and economic and political power. Multinationals control between a quarter and a third of total world output, and trade *within* multinationals (ie, between multinational subsidiaries) accounts for 30% of all world trade.⁷ The total sales of multinationals' foreign affiliates in 1976 is estimated at \$830bn, a figure which approximates the *total* output of all non-oil producing LDCs. In addition to oil, the production, processing and marketing of many commodities (including bauxite, copper, iron ore, nickel, lead, zinc, tin, tobacco, bananas and tea) is dominated in each case by a small number of multinational companies.

The demand in the NIEO has been for a code of conduct for multinational companies, including accounting practices (such as transfer pricing), the terms of technology transfer, restrictive

if achieved, it will involve a transfer
from the poor in the rich countries to
the rich in the poor countries.

practices and increased information. As with other demands, progress in this area has been negligible, and, familiarly, Britain's negotiating position has been among the most reactionary and negative.

Britain's net earnings from overseas investments in LDCs (excluding oil and insurance) averaged £675m in 1974-77, compared with annual net investment in LDCs of £400m. During 1974-77, LDCs accounted for 25% of new UK investment abroad, and for 33% of earnings from investment abroad.⁸ It is clear that Britain's negative attitude towards the control of multinationals can have major effects on many LDCs, because of the substantial role of UK-based companies in many LDC economies. Of particular concern is the fact that 'Conservative and Labour governments do not appear to have had different views as to the "national interest" in exempting multinational capital from close regulation.'⁹ One illustration of this is Britain's response to the pledge by advanced capitalist countries in 1977 to stamp out international corporate bribery. At the end of 1977 the US government introduced legislation providing for fines of up to \$10,000 on corporate executives who pay bribes overseas, and prison

⁴ *North-South: A Programme for Survival*.

⁵ V Cable, *British Interests and the Third World*, ODI, London, 1980, p76. The statement was made on February 20 1980.

⁶ See P Wintour, *Workers of the World*, *New Statesman*, May 9 1980, p698, from which the information in the rest of this paragraph has been drawn.

⁷ *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, ch12, where much of the information in this paragraph has been obtained.

⁸ V Cable, *op cit*, Ch4.

⁹ *Ibid*, p56.

sentences of up to 5 years. Britain, while describing corruption as 'repugnant', refused to make any positive proposals.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The gloomy outlook for the NIEO is likely to become gloomier unless drastic action is taken in the very near future by governments in the advanced capitalist countries. The failure to achieve any significant progress towards a NIEO raises two important questions. First, was this inevitable, and secondly, does it matter?

The answer to the first question needs to take account of three fundamental problems in the way the NIEO was conceived. There has been a presumption that, since a major economic division of the world is between the North and the South, which roughly corresponds to rich/poor, this economic division will be reflected in a political division, and that the South would form a cohesive political bargaining unit, with a 'harmony of interests'. The problem is that this 'harmony of interests' does not exist in political terms, because of the enormous political divisions among the South. This has been demonstrated by the manifest divisions among LDCs once negotiations have moved away from the level of rhetoric, towards more concrete issues. A further aspect of divisions among the South is that, despite the relative poverty of the South compared with the North, there are major economic differences among the countries of the South, between oil producers and non-oil producers, between newly industrialising countries and primary exporters, and between the least developed countries and middle-income countries.

A second problem in the conception of the NIEO is that most discussions of the NIEO have been in terms of distribution between countries, ie, from rich countries to poor countries, and concern mechanisms of bringing this about. Of vital importance, however, is the issue of distribution within countries. The most cynical position on the NIEO is that, if achieved, it will involve a transfer from the poor in the rich countries to the rich in the poor countries. In the case of the oil price rise, this kind of retrogressive distribution clearly occurred, since inflation in advanced capitalist countries hit the living standards of the working classes, and the extra oil revenues benefited Arab oil sheikhs, oil companies, and strengthened the economic position of reactionary regimes in many OPEC countries. Thus the emphasis on mechanisms of distribution of income and resources between classes within both rich and poor countries.

The third problem of the way in which the NIEO was conceived relates to the economic basis of LDCs' 'harmony of interests', a major aspect of which is the role of OPEC. It was the formation of OPEC and successful flexing by oil producers of their economic muscles *vis-a-vis* the North that originally breathed life into the demand for a NIEO; OPEC has repeatedly argued that no progress on 'orderly' arrangements for oil price rises will be made until the North concedes to the NIEO demands. The original success of OPEC was applauded by other LDCs as a victory against imperialism, but now this idea rings hollow. The economic effects of the oil price increases on oil-importing LDCs have been severe, and with no sign of the North's intransigence abating, further oil price rises are no longer viewed as an advance for the South. This became clear at the 5th UN Conference on Trade and Development in Manila in 1979, where the Latin Americans attempted to have oil prices put on the agenda for discussion; this attempt was successfully prevented by OPEC.

Does it matter?

Taking these issues into account, the lack of success of the NIEO may not come as any surprise. But does it matter? The answer has to be yes, for two important reasons. First, the freedom of manoeuvre of a progressive government in an LDC to bring about changes in a

socialist direction is partly dependent on external forces: for example, a country in debt to the IMF has virtually no freedom of manoeuvre to pursue progressive policies, and alternative sources of credit are either inadequate, more expensive, or insist on IMF-style terms. The Cuban economy is heavily dependent on subsidies from the Soviet Union, but the latter would rapidly bankrupt itself if it attempted to provide economic support on the scale required to all progressive LDCs. By improving stability of international commodity markets, greater control over the activities of multinational companies, reforms in agencies such as the IMF, and increases in the level and quality of aid and credit, the freedom of manoeuvre of progressive governments will be greater. The common response to this argument is to dismiss such changes as irrelevant, and that progressive forces in LDCs need to build a revolution and then retreat into autarky. Autarky is not an option for most LDCs with small and lopsided economies, and this advice is hardly constructive for countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Grenada.

The second reason why the NIEO matters is that progressive changes inside advanced capitalist countries are bound up with the

Therefore there is a large element of self-interest for the Left in taking such proposals seriously

progressive re-ordering of the world economy. Problems which have arisen from the depletion of resources stem not from an absolute inadequacy but from the character of their production and distribution. 1 American uses as much commercial energy as 2 Germans, 3 Swiss, 9 Mexicans, 16 Chinese, 53 Indians, 109 Sri Lankans, 438 Malians, and 1072 Nepalese.¹¹ This pattern of consumption has to change, and if this change is linked to the restructuring of production and consumption within advanced capitalist countries (eg, replacement of private by public transport), it need not involve cuts in living standards in advanced capitalist countries in order for living standards in LDCs to rise. This also applies to the restructuring of industrial production discussed above. Linked to long-term trade agreements, involving the planned export of capital goods and planned import of consumer goods and raw materials, our living standards and level of industrial production will not decline as a result of increased industrialisation in LDCs.

Thus there are important reasons why issues on the NIEO agenda need to be placed on the agenda of the Left in Britain, otherwise the proposals will remain on the scrap heap. Partly this is because the current recession will inevitably involve a major restructuring of the world economy, which is bound to have far-reaching effects on Britain. Proposals such as those of the NIEO and the Brandt Commission are precisely proposals for a progressive re-ordering of the world economy, stressing the interdependence of conditions for prosperity in the North with conditions for development in the South. Therefore there is a large element of self-interest for the Left in taking such proposals seriously, since socialist advance in Britain requires progressive changes in the world economy. Partly, however, there is a moral argument: a 'reminder that, as the average western person wonders how to pull in the belt for the coming energy crunch, that over 600 million people in LDCs are living in such poverty that their annual income is less than the cost of two new tyres on the average western car'.¹² □

¹⁰ See *The Guardian*, February 26 1979.

¹¹ The Brandt Report, ch10.

¹² Ian Guest, 'Fragmentation of the Third World is already apparent', *The Guardian*, December 29 1979.

Reviews

GRAMSCI'S POLITICS

Anne Showstack Sassoon

Croom Helm 1980 261pp pb £5.95

Gramsci's Politics is an ambitious title. How, from among the fragmentary, dispersed and in some cases discontinuous writings of this innovative Italian communist can we discern a politics? Thanks to Lawrence and Wishart, we now have at our disposal three broadly representative volumes of Gramsci's writings from 1910 to 1935¹ in which the major themes of his theoretical and political activity can be located, but to glean from this, in specific terms, 'Gramsci's politics' is a very difficult task. From particular passages it might be possible to suggest a 'syndicalist' Gramsci, a 'spontaneist' Gramsci, a 'leninist' Gramsci, a 'culturalist' Gramsci and so on. Certain passages or texts are chosen and prioritised to prove this or that case in relation to Gramsci for particular ends. To find a book which is at once sensitive to the openness of Gramsci's writings, tracing concepts and themes as they are developed, and sometimes abandoned, in his work and relate these to his practice as a political militant is rare. Anne Showstack Sassoon has managed this in a book which is both comprehensive and accessible.

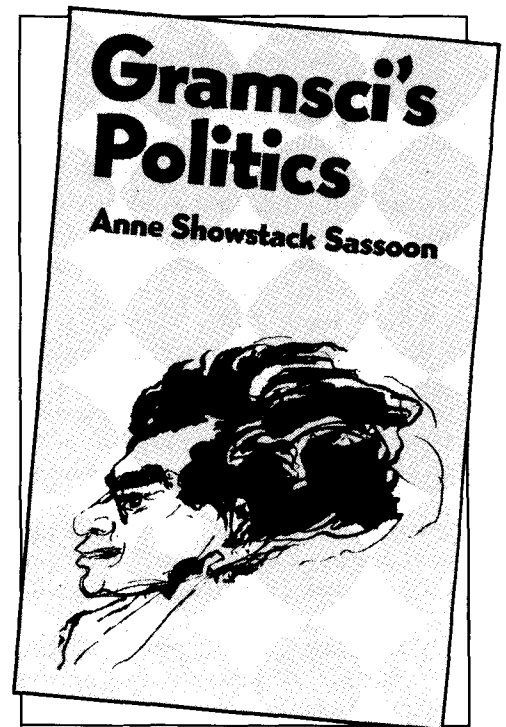
The author justly remarks in her introduction that, at the level of political theory, there has been little theoretical discussion of Gramsci's work. The central concept of hegemony is now tacitly acknowledged to be important, if only by virtue of repetition, but this is frequently subsumed within a

'cultural' framework — something to do with 'hearts and minds', but not the 'reality' of political struggle. In her systematic analysis of the major themes of Gramsci's work — the state, the historical bloc, the intellectuals, organisation of political parties, the war of position, the relation of production and politics — the frequently abused and misused concept of hegemony takes on a much broader and politically pertinent significance.

The book is divided into three sections, the first dealing with the formative 'Years in Turin', the second with 'The Struggle for a New Type of Party' after the formation of the Communist Party, and the third, 'Gramsci's Concept of the Party and Politics' which is the most extensive section, dealing with the major concepts in the *Prison Notebooks*. In a combination of historical narrative, political analysis and broader conceptualisation, this is the first book to date which provides a detailed and systematic analysis of the breadth of Gramsci's political theory².

The starting-point of Anne Showstack Sassoon's argument is probably best stated as Gramsci's critique of the narrowness of existing conceptions of politics whether they took the form of a social-democratic division between leaders and led, politicians and trade-unionists, or the voluntarist vanguardism of the early leadership of the Communist Party, especially Amadeo Bordiga. The early experience and failure of the Turin Factory Councils, an attempt to create autonomous modes of organisation outside both the unions and the state, forced Gramsci to a consideration of the complexity of the existing state and the forms of organisation and politics required to confront it. A simple politics of 'substitution' was not enough, and here, Gramsci's conception of the revolution as a *process* begins to emerge.

The author argues that the full range of concepts in the *Prison Notebooks* and their meaning for political practice can only be



appreciated if we understand that the starting-point is the *state*. The nature of the state determines the form of the political struggle, the modes of organisation necessary for its transformation, and the breadth and extent of ideological struggle depending on the relative strength or weakness of 'civil society' or the 'apparatuses of hegemony'. Gramsci provides not a general theory of the capitalist state, but criteria for specific analyses of, for example, the weakness of the Italian liberal state, subject to an 'incomplete' bourgeois revolution (the Risorgimento) and the fragility of its hegemony compared to that of, say, Britain or France; a fragility which fascism was able to exploit in the absence of any alternative. Gramsci's conception of the state is an extended one but not a universal one.

The author demonstrates the number of considerations which Gramsci brings to bear

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on this definition, the determinations which forced him to arrive at a more complex notion of the state than had previously been current. These include the specific functions and effects of intellectuals, which Gramsci, uniquely, defines as '... the entire social stratum which exercises an organisational function in the wide sense — whether in the field of production, or in that of culture, or in that of political administration.' (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p97).

What *Gramsci's Politics* also clearly shows is the *dual* level of Gramsci's analysis, the ability to balance the elaboration of theoretical schema with their conjunctural application to a particular moment in the complex development of society. Gramsci avoids the overemphasis on general schema common to certain forms of Marxism (*the class struggle, the state, base and super-structure*) and concentrates more on the specific forms and relations of force which these concepts can indicate but never *explain*. This ability to beat a path between empiricism and theoreticism is something which seems to be beyond the grasp of many contemporary debates within marxist theory. And indeed, in Gramsci's work, as the author points out, there are some notions which start out as practical and pragmatic which are

transformed subsequently into long-term strategic and theoretical concepts. One such is the 'war of position'. Anne Showstack Sassoon argues that though Gramsci uses this concept initially to describe the different tactics required by revolutionaries in the West compared to those used in relation to the more coercive states of the 'East', where a 'war of manoeuvre' is required, it eventually becomes a concept indicating a *general* strategy operated by the bourgeoisie in the continual adjustment and transformation of its own tactics and forms of rule. A 'war' then — and Gramsci warns that military metaphors must be used with caution — which demands an equally complex struggle on a whole series of fronts on the part of the dominated groups.

And in case we thought that this was all going on 'out there', Anne Showstack Sassoon constantly reminds us that for Gramsci, the organisation of political parties is also a crucial question in this complex struggle. Gramsci constantly warns against the dangers of 'bureaucratic centralism' in the organisation of oppositional forces and against 'abstract' identifications of party with class or substitution of party for class. Gramsci, the author emphasises, insists upon a 'centralism in movement' (p162) and

'democratic centralism offers an elastic formula, which can be embodied in many diverse forms; it comes alive in so far as it is interpreted and continually adapted to necessity.' (p163). Precisely what this 'necessity' involves in the present situation, with the changing structure of the working class and of 'producers' as a whole, with the shifting frontiers of the state and the emergence of 'transverse' struggles not directly related to class-considerations, is a question which an understanding of the breadth of Gramsci's work can help us to grasp. Anne Showstack Sassoon's well-documented assessment of Gramsci's politics goes a long way in establishing the continuing relevance of a complex body of theory and practice which still, largely, lies at a distance from the socialist movement in this country.

Colin Mercer

¹Cf. (in order of publication) Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971; *Selections from the Political Writings 1910-20*, 1977; and *Selections from the Political Writings 1921-26*, 1978.

²This is not to ignore the major work by Christine Buci Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1980, which, as the title suggests, has a different emphasis.

NOTES

PLATFORM

Sue Beardon writes: *Platform*, the new journal from the alternative theatre, is now 2 issues old, and a third is due out soon. Its appearance was long awaited, in that nowhere were the issues, problems and critiques arising from the so-called 'fringe' debated publicly.

The big problem which *Platform* faces is that the very people from whom those debates should spring, the actors, performers and dramaturges of the fringe, are on the whole the very people who do *not* write. It is for this reason that the magazine tends to go for a large interview component, and also carries a section for short news and views.

Fortunately no editorial line impedes the development of the magazine, which hopes to be, as its name suggests, a platform for fringe and other theatre workers.

Of course, it is not just aimed at a readership of theatre workers. It is hoped that all who support the cultural developments on the Left will read, and perhaps contribute to the journal.

Platform costs 70p and is available from: 18 Vauxhall Grove, London SW8.

NICARAGUA TODAY

Richard Fratado writes: What is really happening in Nicaragua today? What does it matter to us anyway? The mass media do not give us much help in answering these questions. For most of the last 10 months they have said scarcely a word on the subject. It is exactly to help towards breaking this blockade on information about Nicaragua that the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign has decided to launch *Nicaragua Today*. Without proper information it will be impossible to build the kind of support in the British labour movement that is needed right now.

It is true that at the time of last year's insurrection against the Somoza dictatorship our newspapers and television screens were full of it. Before then, Nicaragua had been just another small, far-off country in Central America, one of those 'banana republics' with unruly football crowds.

Press coverage has followed the lines of US foreign policy towards the revolution in Nicaragua, the same policy that our own Tory government is mimicking so faithfully. At the time of the insurrection this meant looking for a 'moderate' alternative that could

replace the Somozas but not interfere with Western business interests. Once this had failed, the policy was to starve the Nicaraguans of economic and political support. The media fell silent. Now this policy is also failing.

A new US task force is staging large-scale military manoeuvres in different parts of the Caribbean. US military personnel are training counter-insurgency forces throughout Central America, building helicopter bases in El Salvador and preparing for a new Vietnam in the region if necessary.

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign therefore asks labour movement organisations not only to affiliate to the campaign, but also to organise meetings, invite speakers, show films and slide shows and to distribute *Nicaragua Today* as widely as possible.

Nicaragua Today costs 15p and is available from Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1.

Error: Alan McKinnon is a GP in Glasgow and not a lecturer as stated in the August issue.

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